Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/privatelifeofmar0000fsfl

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE MARSHAL DUKE OF RICHELIEU

BROADWAY LIBRARY OF
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
FRENCH LITERATURE

THE BROADWAY LIBRARY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

EDITED BY RICHARD ALDINGTON
WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
BY SIR EDMUND GOSSE

DIALOGUES OF DENIS DIDEROT. Translated by FRANCIS BIRRELL

THE SOFA: A MORAL TALE. By CRÉBILLON FILS. Translated by BONAMY DOBRÉE

LETTERS OF VOLTAIRE AND FREDERICK THE GREAT. Translated by RICHARD ALDINGTON

MEMOIRS OF THE BASTILLE. By LATUDE and LINGUET. Translated by J. AND S. F. MILLS WHITHAM

MEMOIRS OF THE PRINCE DE LIGNE. Translated by LEIGH ASHTON

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE DUKE OF RICHELIEU. Translated by F. S. FLINT

THE REVERIES OF A SOLITARY. By J. J. ROUSSEAU Translated by JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

SHORT STORIES BY CRÉBILLON FILS, ABBÉ DE VOISENON, AND MONTESQUIEU. Translated by MRS. WILFRID JACKSON

LETTERS OF MLLE. DE LESPINASSE. Translated by E. H. F. MILLS

PICTURES OF PARIS IN XVIII CENTURY. By L. S. MERCIER. Translated by MRS. WILFRID JACKSON

THE NUN. By DENIS DIDEROT. Translated by FRANCIS BIRRELL

MEMOIRS OF MADAME D'EPINAY. Translated by MRS. E. C. ALLINGHAM

MEMOIRS OF MARMONTEL. Translated by BRIGIT PATMORE

MEMOIRS OF MADAME DE STAAL-DE LAUNAY. Translated by RAYMOND MORTIMER

WORKS OF JOUBERT. Translated by H. P. COLLINS

MEMOIRS OF THE DUC DE LAUZUN. Translated by C. K. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF

THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES OF 1792. Translated by RALPH PARTRIDGE

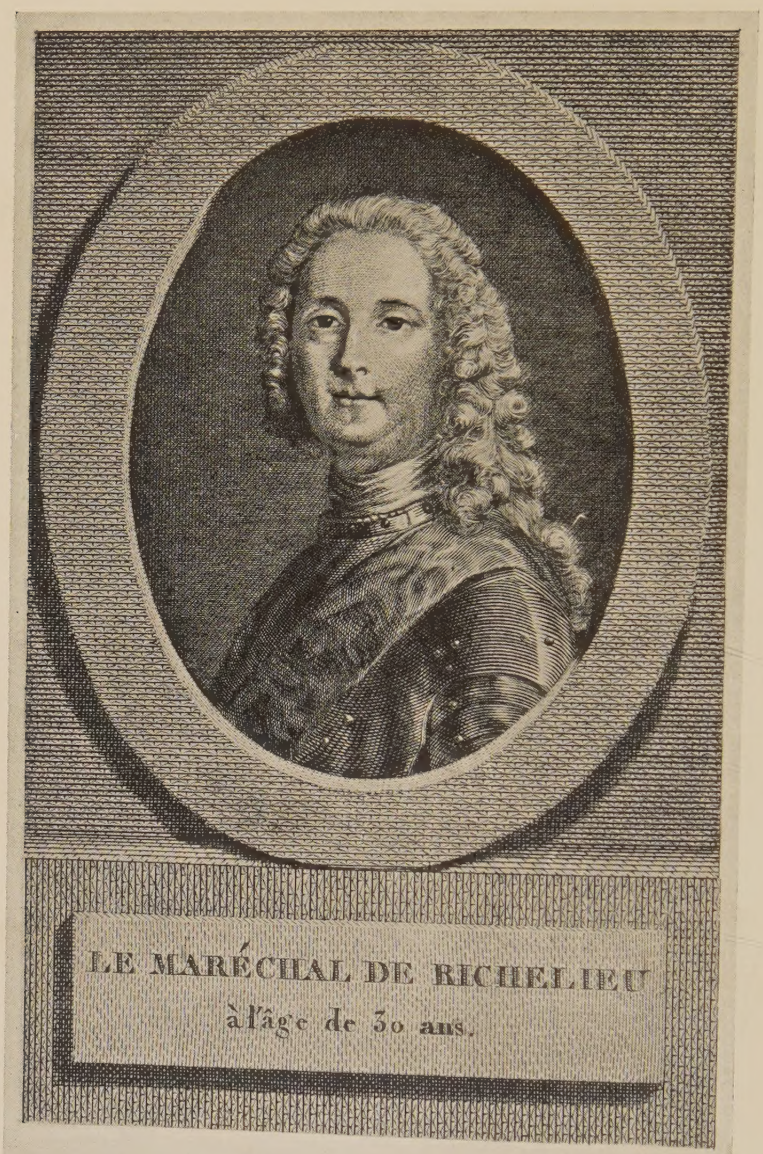
MEMOIRS OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR. By her waiting woman, MADAME DU HAUSSET. Translated by F. S. FLINT

LETTERS OF VOLTAIRE AND MADAME DU DEFFAND. Translated by RICHARD ALDINGTON

ADVENTURES OF ZELOIDE. By PARADIS DE MONCRIF. Translated by C. K. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF

Published by

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.



LOUIS FRANÇOIS ARMAND DU PLESSIS

Duc de Richelieu, at the age of thirty

(From an engraving by Mariage, after the painting by Jean-Baptiste van Loo)

[*front*

THE BROADWAY LIBRARY
OF XVIII CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE MARSHAL DUKE OF RICHELIEU

Translated by F. S. Flint, with an Introduction by Richard Aldington

Published by

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE, CARTER LANE, LONDON

First published in 1927

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD AND ESHER

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

Louis François Armand du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, at the Age of Thirty - - - *Frontispiece*

(*From an engraving by Mariage, after the painting by Jean-Baptiste van Loo*)

Louise Anne de Bourbon (Mademoiselle de Charolais) - 48

Louis François Armand du Plessis, Maréchal Duc de Richelieu - - - - - - 80

(*From the statue by Pigalle in the Louvre*)

Visite Nocturne. Faite au Duc de Richelieu, Détenu à la Bastille. Pour la Troisième fois dans un cachot, par deux Princesses du sang déguisées - - 112

(*From an engraving by Le Roy, after the drawing by Le Cler*)

The Private Life of the Duke of Richelieu

INTRODUCTION

THERE are moments when History seems the most delusive of studies as a science, when it seems to consist of a mass of more or less interesting fiction about the past plus a small handful of laboriously gathered but not always highly exciting facts. It is surprisingly difficult to form a correct and unbiassed opinion even about the events of our own time, so strangely are facts coloured by the prejudices of those who relate them. What exactly were the events which led up to the issue involved in the General Strike in 1926 in England? What exactly happened at the Battle of Jutland? These events have been related by men of the highest integrity and published in periodicals whose candour is above suspicion; and yet there are strange divergencies in different accounts. I have read the official account of a battle in which I took part as a combatant and this account differed widely from my own impressions; yet when I came to try to set down accurately what I had thought were unforgettable impressions burned into my memory, I found I had to refer to marked

maps and Field-Service note-books to determine even the simplest facts. Rightly then does the École des Chartes, with its ideal of scientific history, gravely doubt the evidence of memoirs; and not unnaturally does one come to doubt the possibility of history as a science. I confess that my efforts to discover whether the *Vie Privée de Richelieu* is authentic, and, if not, who was actually the author, have been so awkward and complicated that I should no more give a confident answer than I should confidently assert who was the author of *Eikon Basilike*, or who was the Man in the Iron Mask. If I follow the authority of Barrière I must assume they are genuine; if I follow the more respectable authority of Boislisle I must reject them as a forgery. And, in the end, I find myself weakly vacillating between these two opinions.

Lord Acton long ago declared that for the serious historian of the French Revolution the era of memoirs as reliable material was over. The École des Chartes, one gathers, had its claws into more recondite and authentic documents and was content to drop this lesser prey. What the historians drop, more frivolous readers may perhaps be allowed to pick up. If memoirs are not history, they may be literature: they may have all the pleasing inaccuracies of human nature. They may not relate facts with strict and impartial accuracy, but they may reveal personality. Let us abandon the pleasing delusion that we are reading them as history and read them as a sub-class of fiction which has as much truth to life in it as fiction usually has. Memoirs will not help us to pass examinations

or to qualify as examiners, but they will tell us something of interest, if it is only the tittle-tattle of generations that have long since crumbled to dust. We do not complain that Marcel Proust fails to give us an exact and scientific report on the human flora and fauna of the Faubourg St Honoré; we are content with his elaborately finished gallery of portraits. We shall not read Saint-Simon for his views of the position of the illegitimate children of Louis XIV or the function of the French Parlement, but for his own personality, his minute descriptions of trivial things now become infinitely interesting because they are extinct, and, above all, for those renderings of human character which seem to place us at the very centre of their being. The memoirs to be published in this series will not give us a scientific history of France in the eighteenth century. At worst, they may be entertaining. At best, they will reveal human nature, they will show attractive or remarkable or repulsive personalities as they saw themselves or as they were seen by contemporaries through the clouds of daily scandal and report. They will not be as decorous as a Court Circular, but they will certainly be more lively.

As everyone knows, French literature is exceedingly rich in memoirs, particularly for the reigns of Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI, the Revolution and the Empire. They form a mass of light reading which is singularly attractive to anyone with imagination. They would, perhaps, be more satisfactory if one could always be certain of their authenticity and of textual accuracy. Memoirs, like confessions, are

seldom perfectly candid; they are often deflected by personal feelings of hatred and friendship and by the author's desire to cut an amiable or striking figure to posterity. They may contain first-hand information of the most vivid sort; on the other hand, they may relate the worst tittle-tattle as authentic facts within the author's personal knowledge. They may reach us contaminated by anxious relatives, altered by suspicious authority, interpolated by unscrupulous editors. They may even be utterly spurious; or they may be a compilation from authentic sources attributed to some eminent dead person by an unscrupulous man-of-letters from motives political, religious or merely mercenary. Unhappily, the *Vie Privée de Richelieu Fragment* belongs to the most suspicious class of all.

I do not propose to lead the reader through the diffuse and intricate accounts of the Richelieu papers through which I have unwillingly followed my learned but not very lively guides. Let it suffice to remark that they display an elaborate confusion masked by an affectation of rigid method, which leaves one almost equally impressed and bewildered. I must, however, try to put the reader in possession of the main facts, if only for the purpose of forestalling any possible objection that I have been duped into publishing a forgery as the work of the Duc de Richelieu. The following Richelieu memoirs exist:

1. *Mémoires du Maréchal-Duc de Richelieu*, compiled and published by Jean Louis Soulavie. 1790-93.

2. *Vie Privée du Maréchal de Richelieu*, published by Jean Benjamin Laborde. 1791.

3. Another shorter fragment entitled *Vie Privée du Maréchal de Richelieu*, published in the third volume of the above, reproduced by Barrière as authentic, dismissed by Boislisle and others as the work of one Faur. This fragment is the work here translated.

4. Authentic memoirs: *Mémoires Authentiques du Maréchal de Richelieu* (1725-57), publiés d'après le Manuscrit Original pour la Société de l'Histoire de France. Par A. de Boislisle, Membre de l'Institut. 1918.

Though they are not very relevant to the question of authenticity, the following may also be mentioned:

5. *Anecdotes sur Richelieu* par le Chevalier de Rulhières. 1792.

6. *Mémoires Historiques et Anecdotiques sur le Maréchal de Richelieu* par La Motte-Langon. 1832.

7. *Nouveaux Mémoires du Maréchal de Richelieu* par M. de Lescure, 1869. (Dismissed by Boislisle as a "pastiche romanesque", possibly because it is interesting and accepts the authenticity of the *Vie Privée*. Lescure edited a number of eighteenth-century French memoirs and other works, including a collection of the letters of Madame du Deffand, which to the best of my knowledge has not yet been superseded.)

Richelieu died in 1788, and a large quantity of his papers had been seen by Soulavie. Soulavie has a bad reputation for unscrupulous use of important documents, and it is fairly obvious that (1) he interpolated matter from other and authentic but then unpublished memoirs, and (2) he indulged in a good deal of

romancing on his own and that with a political bias. Now it was announced before the book appeared that Soulavie was engaged in this work and that "an intimate friend of the Marshal would publish his Vie Intime, at the request of the deceased who had begged him to include therein the documents and episodes of a less serious kind". This statement was made in a letter (anonymous) published in the *Annales Politiques* (perhaps by Linguet?) in 1788. This immediately led to a controversy, and the then Duc de Richelieu denied that there were any revelations of a scandalous or gallant nature among his father's papers. The publication of Soulavie's *Mémoires de Richelieu* caused excitement and comment from their (apparent?) revelations. A competing edition of the *Mémoires* was announced in September 1790 as in preparation under the editorship of Sénac and with the consent of the then Duc de Richelieu; but this was never published.

So far, then, we have Soulavie's edition and the Duc de Richelieu's repudiation of it; and we have the newspaper's announcement that someone was preparing a *Vie Intime*. This was the work of Laborde or of Laborde and Faur or of Faur under Laborde's name. Laborde was admittedly intimate with the Marshal, and had been given by him full permission to go through his papers. Faur had been private secretary of the Duc de Fronsac, the Marshal's son. The part taken by Faur is only based on allegations by Barbier and Quérard. This *Vie Privée* of course contained the famous *Fragment* here published,

accepted by the Goncourts (for example) as authentic, but denounced by Boislisle and other serious historians.

We have now arrived at the centre of all this confusion, and judgment on the authenticity of the *Vie Privée* and *Fragment* can at best be suspended in face of the heavy artillery. The problem might be at least provisionally solved if the papers of the Maréchal could be inspected. Unluckily, they were dispersed during the Revolution and many were lost. The fragmentary memoirs which remain, written by the Marshal when he was a very old man, are those printed by Boislisle. Strangely enough, Boislisle admits that the *Vie Privée* contains much that is authentic, including the episode of Madame Michelin; but he regards with severe disapproval other light and licentious revelations. Considering that by universal consent the Marshal was admitted to be the greatest rake of his times, one would have thought that these might be considered at least probable. However, Science decides against them.[1]

I shall now endeavour to convey my own impression about these various memoirs. Soulavie worked from authentic material, but interpolated, falsified and embroidered, partly from political motives. Laborde (who wrote with or without Faur's aid) had gone through the Marshal's papers and knew him personally; Science, in the person of M. Boislisle, admits that a considerable amount of his book is genuine. The Authentic Memoirs are not in dispute. Now, the

[1] Science might have its reasons for defending a member of the House of Richelieu.

Fragment of the *Vie Privée* given here is alleged by its editor (Laborde or Faur, who is also supposed by some to be its author) to have been dictated by the Marshal to send to the Marquise de * * *, in exchange for which the nameless Marquise was to be kind. The *Fragment* is rather illiterate; so are the authentic memoirs. It is careless in style but in Court jargon; so are the authentic memoirs. The *Fragment* is lively and licentious, the authentic memoirs dull and political; but the latter were dictated in old age, and the former is supposed to have been written at an earlier time. The main episode of the *Fragment*, the story of Madame Michelin, is admitted to be true even by Science. Ten years after Richelieu's death, Barrière saw the Michelin episode dramatized on the stage. Nobody, apparently, denied its truth, and Barrière was so much impressed by its emotional and tragic side that he reproduced the original story when, many years later, he issued a partial edition of Soulavie's memoirs and the rest of the *Fragment*. My own view is that one may at least ask for a Scottish verdict of Not Proven to the charge that Faur *entirely invented* the *Fragment* and that it is utterly unfounded. Yet, recent events have shown us that absurd gossip may even now be published about eminent living persons and that the name of a man whose reputation is above suspicion may nevertheless be regrettably involved. Literary adventurers, seeking the favour of the Revolutionary Government, could take no more effective line than that of disparaging the once-honoured name of Richelieu, the creator of Bourbon despotism; and the Duke had

provided every opportunity for scandalous allegations. However, the reader will make his own choice and read the following pages either as an authentic and cynical confession by the most notorious breaker of female hearts (or, more accurately, arouser of female temperaments) in an age which was the reverse of Mrs Grundyish; or as a brisk and not too scrupulous compilation of current scandal about the Marshal's amorous exploits with a foundation of fact for the Madame Michelin story, at least. In any case, the importance of the *Vie Privée Fragment* as a document should be noted; both in the early days of the Revolution and during the nineteenth century it has been very frequently used by democratic writers and by less partial if unprofessional historians as evidence of the morals and manners of a great French lord of the old regime.

The typical and outstanding literary figure in the reign of Louis XV was Voltaire; it was not until the last years of that King's life that the gay, encyclopædic, "enlightened" intellectualism of Voltaire was seriously challenged by the emotionalism and melancholy ecstasies which the genius of Rousseau made so powerful. The Duc de Richelieu is less unquestionably the typical and outstanding aristocrat of the same age. Yet, though Richelieu has competitors for this bad eminence, he certainly was not excelled by anybody in the arts and accomplishments of a fashionable great lord of that age. Among the luminaries of Versailles, Richelieu had to some extent the pre-eminence which Voltaire claimed and held among the intellectuals.

The life of the Marshal Duke has been ably written by Mr Noel Williams, and to his book I refer all those who wish to be fully informed of all the circumstances of Richelieu's life. I shall make no attempt here to trace the full story of his ninety-two years, but shall limit myself to noting some of his exploits as general, diplomat and intriguer. Louis François Armand de Vignerot du Plessis (born 13th March, 1696) was the only son of Cardinal Richelieu's great-nephew, Armand Jean de Vignerot, to whom the Cardinal left the Duchy of Richelieu and vast wealth. Fortunately for our Marshal, the Cardinal had bound most of the estate with an entail, for otherwise mortgages and his father's extravagance would have left him a poor inheritance. As the future bearer of a great name, respected by Louis XIV as having belonged to the creator of Bourbon despotism, the young Duc de Fronsac was well received at Court and consequently petted and spoiled by Madame de Maintenon who ever saw the will of God in the wishes of her husband. Fronsac, however, seems to have received an insufficiency of grace, for at a surprisingly early age he distinguished himself by amorous intrigues and by making open love to a Royal Princess, the Duchesse de Bourgogne. In consequence of this affair, which made some disturbance, and of gambling debts, and of his scandalous neglect of his young wife, the Duc de Fronsac paid his first visit to the Bastille at the request of his own father and with the almost parental connivance of the King and Madame de Maintenon. The young Duke feigned amendment in

prison, but his acting did not deceive his father and he was detained there for more than a year. When he was finally released, he was sent off to the army of Villars, but not before he had achieved further amorous conquests. The old Duc de Richelieu died in May, 1715, four months before Louis XIV; and Fronsac inherited the title and estates. With the sudden reaction of morals and manners which occurred during the Regency, the Duc de Richelieu became a prominent and scandalous figure.

Richelieu was married three times. At fourteen he was married to Anne Catherine de Noailles, much against his own wishes; and, though the poor girl was innocent of any ill-will towards him and indeed made every effort to render their married life tolerable, he treated her with odious vanity and harshness. She died in 1716, when her husband was only twenty. During her lifetime Richelieu's attachment to Mademoiselle de Charolais, of the house of Condé, was as obvious to the world as his flagrant infidelities with other women. It was expected that he would propose to marry her, but instead he carried on a simultaneous intrigue with her relative, Mademoiselle de Valois, who was utterly infatuated with him. The list of his other conquests is large and amazing, but it is scarcely necessary to repeat the names of his victims. He successfully stole the Regent's mistresses and was honoured (or dishonoured) by the remarkable occurrence of a duel between the Marquise de Polignac and the Marquise de Nesle, who fought with knives to determine their right to his favours. Both ladies were

wounded, but were separated by passers-by before serious damage was done to anything but their reputations. Mademoiselle de Valois was married off to the Duke of Modena, but it is reported that not only did her relations with Richelieu continue almost to her wedding day, but also that he followed her to Modena in disguise and had several interviews there with her. This is exactly the kind of adventure which attracted Richelieu and which he was capable of carrying out with supreme audacity. It is said that he obtained access to Mademoiselle de Valois in the Palais Royale by hiring a house next door and cutting through the fire-place a passage, which was hidden by a large iron plate.[1] The same story is also told of a later affair with Madame de Popelinière, wife of the financier. But this Valmont in real life was not content with his innumerable illicit conquests. In 1734 he married Mademoiselle de Guise, partly through the good offices of Voltaire, who was immensely pleased with his part of negotiator. But Mademoiselle de Guise's family did not like Richelieu; he was insulted by the Prince de Lixin, a cousin of his wife, and killed him in a duel. Finally, long after the death of his second wife, when he was eighty-four, he married a Madame de Rooth, with the object, it is said, of producing a son to whom he could leave away all his property not entailed on the Duc de Fronsac, his son by Mademoiselle de Guise. In this he was very nearly successful, but the child was born dead.

Naturally, a man could not behave as Richelieu did without the inconvenience of fighting duels. His

[1] See *Mémoires de Besenval.*

fatal affray with Lixin has already been mentioned. He fought with Monsieur le Duc, the brother of the amorous princess. Before that he had fought with the Comte de Gacé and was sent to the Bastille for this affair. Later on he killed Baron von Pentenrieder in a duel and was himself rather seriously wounded. His personal courage cannot be questioned, and he fought well as a soldier. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Dettingen and led the charge of the household cavalry at Fontenoy. With the aid of Voltaire's skilful propaganda, Richelieu attempted to filch from Marshal Saxe the whole credit for the victory, an ungenerous proceeding which exasperated the French Army. For his quite brilliant services in the defence of Genoa he was made a Marshal. But his greatest feat was the combined naval and military expedition in which he captured Minorca from the English. Admiral Byng, inadequately supported by his government, failed to relieve the beleaguered English forces and was basely sacrificed to popular clamour by the Duke of Newcastle, the "whiffler" whose character Chesterfield has drawn with such masterly contempt. Richelieu, at the request of Voltaire, tried to save Byng by writing a letter stating that the English admiral had done his best. In 1757 he commanded the French Army operating in Germany, but his lack of judgment in concluding the Convention of Kloster-Zeven, and his incapacity for warfare on a European scale caused him to be superseded by the Comte de Clermont. Richelieu would have been an admirable corps commander under a general who knew

how to use his abilities. He could defeat a Duke of Cumberland, but he would have been no match for a Frederick the Great. Moreover, the license of pillage he allowed his troops was fatal to their discipline and naturally created intense hostility in the civilian population. After his retirement in 1758 he did not again see active service. As a diplomat he settled the preliminaries of peace in 1727 when he was ambassador to the Court of Vienna, where he was much disliked. He was constantly engaged in the obscure political intrigues of the ministers and mistresses of Louis XV, but he was defeated in his hopes of becoming Prime Minister by Maurepas and by Madame de Pompadour. He was in high favour with Madame du Barry, but Louis XV refused to allow him political power. If he had any hopes of political success in his old age, they were not realized, for both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette disliked him and the Duke consequently resigned his post of First Gentleman of the Chamber. That post, which he held for many years, made him the almost omnipotent disposer of events in the Comédie Française; he was also a most influential member of the Académie. Hence, among other reasons, Voltaire's abject adulation of Richelieu as "mon héros". Horace Walpole met the Duke in 1765, when the latter was nearly seventy. He is not particularly complimentary, for in a letter to John Chute he says:

"I dined at the duc of Praslin's with four-and-twenty ambassadors and envoys, who never go but on Tuesdays to Court . . . I saw the duc de Richelieu in waiting,

who is pale, except his nose, which is red, much wrinkled, and exactly a remnant of that age which produced general Churchill, Wilkes the player, the Duke of Argyll, etc.".

This is what Saint-Simon says of him when in 1711 he first came to Court, as Duc de Fronsac:

"The Duc de Fronsac married the only daughter of the late M. de Noailles (brother of the Cardinal) and of the third wife of the Duc de Richelieu, his father, who arranged this affair between their children when they themselves married. This little Duc de Fronsac, who was only sixteen, was the prettiest creature both in body and for his wit that one could see. His father had already presented him at Court where Madame de Maintenon, an old friend of M. de Richelieu, as I have remarked before, treated him like a son, and consequently Madame de Bourgogne and everyone else up to the King did wonders for him. He responded with so much grace, conducted himself with so much wit, skill, freedom and politeness that he soon became the pet (*coqueluche*) of the Court. His father slackened the reins too much and his face enchanted the ladies. His wife's, which had nothing disagreeable about it, however, did not charm him. Thrown into society with everything necessary to please and nothing necessary to achieve real worth, he committed innumerable follies which, three months after his marriage, induced his father to commit the further folly of sending the boy to the Bastille. He became so familiar with the place that we shall see him there more than once.".

More than fifty years elapsed between the two portraits and a life of dissipation had reduced the pretty *coqueluche* to the pallid red-nosed remnant of another age. Yet Richelieu must have been a man of extraordinary physical strength, for he not only prolonged his dissipations to an age far beyond that possible to most men, but survived his patriarchal friend of Ferney and died in 1788 on the eve of the Revolution he had unconsciously done his best to invoke. It does not appear that his loss was regretted.

The assertion is sometimes made that Richelieu was the original from whom Laclos drew his character of Valmont, the heartless and consummate seducer in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. Since Richelieu was the most notorious roué of the preceding age, he was naturally selected as the original of that striking portrait of cynical libertinism. But there are other competitors for that unenviable distinction, and we have Comte Tilly's word that Laclos told him Valmont was "not a man of the Court". This was after the outbreak of the Revolution when there could have been no reason for suppressing Richelieu's name. Laclos, however, may not have wished to confess to so obvious a model. But there are several passages in the *Vie Privée Fragment* (to which attention is called in the notes to this translation) which strikingly resemble certain episodes and remarks in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. If we could suppose that these stories formed part of the common talk about Richelieu and were true, they might be alleged as some further proof that the *Vie Privée* is authentic. But the *Liaisons*

Dangereuses were published ten years before the *Vie Privée* and had caused a very considerable sensation. They were in everybody's hands and Valmont was supposed by many people to be a portrait of Richelieu. A skilful forger might play upon this belief by introducing a few touches which would seem to connect the two characters and to give Richelieu all the odium of Valmont. But after all Richelieu has no need to borrow anyone else's infamy.

RICHARD ALDINGTON.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE DUKE OF RICHELIEU

YOU have been asking me, my dearest friend, for a long time now to give you a faithful account of my adventures from the time of my presentation at the Court of Louis XIV until the moment when I made your acquaintance. You are unaware that you are demanding that I shall write volumes and volumes. Yet, in accordance with our agreement, my friendship does not hesitate, and, although I am a lazy man, I promise to send you each week a score of pages of my history. I preserve scrupulously all the material needful to write it, and I think it will be eventful enough and complicated enough not to weary you. I hope to live long; at least it has been predicted that I shall; and I willingly believe a prediction that suits my temper very well. I look forward to adding still more and more interesting deeds to the history of my life. I am nearly fifty, and, as I reckon it, I am at the half-way point of my career; for several astrologers have assured me that I shall die a centenarian, but that I must be careful of the month of March. Thus I still have a margin to play with, and I perceive no change in my moral or physical faculties.

Tingri[1] and I agreed to make a record of all the

[1] The Prince de Tingry.

historical and scandalous events that have happened under our eyes; there are plenty of them; their lesson is that great effects nearly always proceed from slight causes, especially at Court, where a talent for intrigue should be the first qualification of any man who is careful of advancement and his own preservation; and I do not doubt that a history composed from these notes would be very instructive.

It would not be, as we have so often seen, a mass of fabrications, with which an author greedy for the profit offered to him by a bookseller fills out a volume, without even knowing the persons he speaks of or their relationship with the events he is reporting. He forges a romance out of his own head, and adapts it to the man or woman who, in some way or other, has attained celebrity, of which all he knows is a few particular circumstances, and he adorns this rhapsody with the name of history.

I have read accounts of myself that are entirely false. Every day we see an event we have witnessed related in different ways, exaggerated, diminished or falsified, according to the talent of the teller. What are we to think of the history of past centuries, the truth of which has been vouched for? If we are to be certain of the events of a century, those who are initiated into the mysteries of government should take pains to note down everything of any interest that has happened. This diary, which would be kept by several persons—ministers, generals, courtiers and others—would be all the more authentic in that what one would wish to hide the other would publish. It

is very prudent to veil the truth when it may wound people still living; but, when they are dead, why hush it up? The historian whom the King would select (for why should everybody be free to write history if he chooses?), this man, I say, after the generation is extinct, so that none shall be offended, would have nothing more to do than to link up the different happenings, and the true history of the preceding century would thus be written out of hand.

It was this idea that induced Tingri and me to take up the pen; he told me that he had already noted down a large number of events. I too have made a beginning; but I am too fond of gaiety to tie myself down to the task of writing. I prefer the pleasure, which never palls on me, of courting a pretty woman to the tedium of being shut up in a study with the past; it interests me far less than the present. I promise you, however, to be faithful to my engagement with you, and to give you the details of my life as long as I am able. Remember that they are not to do me harm with you, and that, although you may see me as guilty in love as I seldom am in friendship, you will be for me the Duchess of * * *, and you will be able to judge whether, despite my infidelities, I ceased to be her friend. I will put behind me the idea of the heavy labour I am undertaking to please you, and, as it will be accomplished bit by bit, I hope to carry it to an end.

I am overwhelmed with employments that weary and disgust me, and the pleasure of conversing with you will be a very agreeable recreation. Besides, the

reward that awaits me in Paris should keep up my courage. I have already written to you that I should need time to collect my ideas and to have forwarded from Paris the notes in my handwriting contained in a box that Boquemare, my librarian, has just sent to me. I much prefer recalling the deeds of my youth to making war on the Protestants here[1]. I am constantly receiving orders from the Court to punish them, and the little Saint-Florentin[2] is their cruel persecutor; if I were to listen to him, blood would flow. I love to be obeyed; opposition is quite likely to drive me to any lengths; but, happily for the people here, I have not the fanaticism of a missionary. Voltaire long ago convinced me that true religion is tolerant, gentle and consoling. I blame the ministers who have made of ours a bloody religion, and it worries me not at all that men should pray to God in their own way, provided that they do not break the public peace. Saint-Florentin, who is no more religious than I am, holds that the wheel and the gallows must be used to hasten the conversion of the Protestants, and I seem to see the little, ungodly man, armed with a dagger of the League, overrunning Languedoc. Let him wander whither his paltry ideas lead him, and let us return to the details you want of me.

Louis XIV was seventy-two when I was presented

[1] Richelieu, who was governor of Languedoc, was sent there in 1738 to repress the Protestants. He was then forty-two, which hardly squares with the previous statement that he was fifty.

[2] Louis Phélypeaux, Comte de Saint-Florentin, Duc de la Vrillière (1705-1775), Secretary of State and Minister of State in 1751.

at Court; I was fourteen; it is the age of marvels and illusions. I was almoſt annihilated by the majeſty of his person and by the splendour of his imposing mien. He received me with a smile; he loved the name of Richelieu, which my great-uncle[1] bore with such celebrity, and he had too much insight into things not to recognize the influence the Cardinal had had on his reign, the glory of which he had made possible. The Cardinal had put absolute power into the hands of the King, and Louis XIV was too jealous of his power not to acknowledge in the descendants of his miniſter what the latter had done for him. That is no doubt the explanation of the favours with which he honoured my father, who had not had the good fortune to distinguish himself in the King's service during a reign so fertile in great things, and the reason why he lavished them on a scion of that family to which he believed himself indebted.

Having recovered from my firſt timidity, I caſt my eyes on this great King, whom I found to be much above what I had been told about him. Nothing so majeſtic had ever met my eyes, and, of all the men I have seen, he appeared to me the one moſt worthy to command, the one who muſt have been chosen to place at the head of the French nation, if his birth had not called him to the throne. His air of greatness communicated fear, and I saw the imprint of reſpect graven on all faces. One of his looks was a command which the habit of seeing the monarch enabled you to divine. Unfortunate as he was abroad, he main-

[1] Cardinal de Richelieu.

tained at home a most imposing etiquette. He had been misled and deceived once or twice, and he imagined that he was always being so. He maintained with his courtiers the attitude and air of a king; the man seldom appeared. He had accustomed all those who surrounded him to a kind of worship, and it seemed natural to be at his feet.

He was pitied for being so weak as to give ear only to the advice of priests, who led him astray in his old age by pointing out to him that Heaven was angry with him for his past sins; religion covered his eyes with a sacred veil, and he was made to sign orders that did a great deal of harm to France. But, even in this falling away from himself, the great man could still be seen, and he was well worthy of continued admiration as the master who had given laws to nearly the whole of Europe. At a time when complaints were being freely made about the long succession of wars, when the State was oppressed by continual defeats, his first victories were still being discussed. The people lacked everything, and at Court they talked of nothing but his ancient victories. Eugène, puffed up with conquest, nourished a livelier and increasing hatred for the French monarch, whose rebuffs he had been compelled to swallow; and whom he made it a point of honour to crush. The victor of Villeroy, of Tallard, of the Duke of Burgundy, of Boufflers and of Villars[1], jointly with Marlborough, he was convinced

[1] François de Neufville, Duc de Villeroi (1644-1730), Maréchal de France, taken prisoner at Cremona (1701) and defeated at Ramillies (1706); Maréchal Tallard (1652-1728), defeated at Blenheim (1704);

that he would be able to push on up to the gates of Paris; he was feared, and the consternation was general. The King alone appeared calm, and he neglected nothing to maintain the pomp and ceremony he had always loved. Those who formed part of his inner circle, and were witnesses on the few occasions when he allowed a complaint to escape him, sought to entertain him by every possible means.

The Duchess of Burgundy[1], whom he loved, was more active than any other in her efforts to lighten the afflictions of her grandfather. Gay and witty, she amused the old man with her girlishness. Her quick repartees made him smile; she imagined all sorts of means of diverting his thoughts from his misfortunes; balls and entertainments, at which the most amiable of those at Court were gathered together, were employed; and you can well understand that a child of my age was only too happy to be admitted to these pleasures. The misfortunes of the time interested me very little; I thought only of the amusements of Versailles, and of the means of providing myself with them often. I had a stepmother; she it was who ruled everything, and the good lady was very tight-handed with me over my pleasures. I was dressed with the utmost modesty, having regard to my rank; and, when I complained,

---

Louis, Duc de Bourgogne (1682-1712), grandson of Louis XIV, defeated at Oudenarde (1708); Louis François, Duc de Boufflers (1644-1711), Maréchal de France. Claude Louis Hector de Villars, Prince de Martignes, Duc de Villars (1653-1734), Maréchal de France, wounded at Malplaquet (1709).

[1] Marie Adélaide of Savoy (1685-1712).

she used to tell me laughingly that my good looks and graces made up for everything. The compliment did not fill my purse, and it used to put me in an ill-humour that often broke out. My comrades made fun of me, and my replies were always at the expense of my stepmother, whom I did not like. I said one day, when my clothes were thought to be mean, that that should not seem astonishing, as they were stepmother's clothes. Those who know the Court are in a position to judge how successful things like this can be. So for some days my witty saying went the round.

I was a child, and was as yet accustomed only to the usages of my father's house. I had been put on the list of dancers, and very soon I found myself in the intimate circle, owing to my participation in the rehearsals of the dances that were performed before the King. On the days of dress balls, I was there with nearly all the friends of the House, as at Paris, and I was too young to be aware of the shades of respect that I owed to such an assembly. One day, the Duchess of Burgundy, having opened the dress ball with the Duke de Berry[1], and being unable, as a daughter of France, to dance, according to the etiquette of the time, except with a prince or duke, had taken the Duke de Brissac[2] when she had danced alone, after her first minuet.

It was customary for the gentleman to return the minuet to the lady who had chosen him; but M. de

[1] Charles, Duc de Berry (1686-1714), grandson of Louis XIV.

[2] He was Grand Pannetier de France.

Brissac left the Duchess of Burgundy and took another lady. Everybody noticed his mistake; the princess herself, who had been conducted back to her place, had already risen, being unable to imagine that she could have been forgotten; but she decided to sit down again when she saw that the dance had begun, and this caused a slight movement in the ballroom. M. de Brissac went on with his minuet; the lady he should not have chosen came to take me, and I made the same mistake, but intentionally, that Brissac had done with the Duchess of Burgundy, and instead of going to ask my late partner, as I should have done, I went up to the Duchess of Burgundy, saying:

"Madam, permit me to correct the mistakes of my friend Brissac".

This pleasantry, which might have been taken for an impertinence, caused everybody to laugh, was perfectly well received, and made the little duke celebrated. My presence of mind was admired, and even the King was amused. Everybody wanted me to dinner or supper; it was continually a question who should have that pleasure; and the Duchess of Burgundy, from that time, insisted that I should take part in every entertainment.

If I had been shy during the first days of my stay at Court, I was very soon cured of it, for in a short time, I became too bold. I saw that whatever I did was a success; they talked of nothing but my *bons mots*, of my wit; I became the little fashionable toy; even the King sometimes laughed at my pranks, and his presence very soon had no more effect on me. I was the spoiled

child of all the women; Madame de Maintenon thought me charming, and said that I was beginning to be a man. But, while waiting for her prediction to be fulfilled, I was very wayward and wild. The Duchess of Burgundy overwhelmed me with kindnesses. Heiress to the throne though she was, I saw in her only a pretty woman, a lively brunette, and, as I was the darling of the other women, it did not seem astonishing to me that a great princess should regard me in the same way. In a short time, I was on an intimate footing with her. I was permitted to pay my court to her; and I frequently went to practise dance figures in her private room. We also played little games, in which I shone by my inconsequences; they were applauded; and that encouraged me to worse.

One day, before the princess had appeared, I hid myself behind the curtains of her bed, out of curiosity to hear what they would say about me. I did not have long to wait. When the company had assembled, they asked where I was, as they wanted me for the rehearsals.

"He has preferred", said some of the dancers, "to go and pay his court to other women".

My comrades, who were rather jealous, murmured that I was lacking in respect for the princess; she alone excused me.

"At his age", she said, "we must not be too hard upon him. Ladies", she added, "others besides yourselves may think him a very likeable child, and it is not astonishing that he should be detained".

At that moment, I made a movement that shook the

curtain. It was observed, and immediately several of the women were afraid. Who could be hidden there? The thought of the shame of being found out before I was ready to show myself made me slip underneath the bed; again the curtain was shaken, and I saw that the women were on the point of fleeing. Brissac looked.

"It's a man", he said. A man! The word was repeated . . .

Luckily, he bent down and recognized me; otherwise this adventure might have had much more dangerous consequences for me.

"I have the thief; it's Fronsac", he cried, taking me by the leg.

They helped him to pull me out, and I appeared somewhat shamefaced and dishevelled. They all looked at each other; nobody dared speak . . . I threw myself on my knees before the Duchess of Burgundy, who began to laugh; that laugh relieved me; and I took her hand and kissed it.

"Pardon, Madam!" I said: "I wanted to know what these ladies thought of me, and I beg of you to forget my thoughtless act, because of the desire I had to know what sort of reputation I enjoyed".

"We excuse everything", said the princess, "except the fright you gave us". And immediately she started the rehearsals that had been delayed.

This adventure, which proves my forwardness, combined with other thoughtless acts, was the cause of my being sent, some time afterwards, to the Bastille, to teach me reason. It is certain that I never gave

heed to the dangers of my actions. Every day, I became more free with the Duchess of Burgundy. I had the temerity once to try to kiss her, and I do not know what would have happened if I had often had the opportunity of being alone with her; I should have risked everything, and doubtless I should have been blessed or lost.

This impetuosity of my youth, which unfortunately was very little repressed by others, increased more and more. I passed for the hero of the most agreeable adventures. The imprudence and jealousy of a few women turned what had only been suspicions in some people into certainty. Madame ***, who had only just married, was one of the first to give me a reputation; she followed me everywhere. One day, caught by her husband at the moment when I was holding her on my knees in a manner conformable to my desires, she cried out.

"Why", I said to her without losing my head, "do you refuse to kiss me? I shall not let you go, and even before his lordship, you should pay your debts. We made a bet, I won, and you must pay; it is only fair".

"Yes, Madam", the worthy husband went on, "Monsieur de Fronsac is right; you must pay".

The lady still pretended to resist, and gave me time to repair the disorder of my dress. Finally, with the authorization of the husband, I kissed the wife, because, according to him, it was better to yield than to have your hair disarranged. I then got up, without showing any indication of what had happened.

Madame ***, her mind set at rest, could not help laughing, and the happy husband congratulated himself on having settled the dispute.

" Without me, I think he would have remained there a long time yet ", he cried, kissing Madame *** in his turn.

" As long as I could ", I replied.

" You hear him, Madam!" the husband went on; " see what an obligation to me you are under. I know him, he is obstinate, he would have done as he says, and that is why I am very pleased to have got you out of the difficulty."

You can imagine how I felt. I exulted in my presence of mind, and Madame *** loved me all the more for it. She could not prevent herself from telling this adventure to a friend, the latter to another; and she did me infinite honour. A lover with such presence of mind was, according to her, a rare and charming creature. The women cited me as an example to one another, especially when discussing some clumsiness in love.

" Fronsac would not have done that ", they said.

You would not believe the number of favours this good reputation procured for me.

In the midst of this whirlpool, the Duchess of *** attracted me; but I was a long time making vows to her before persuading her. She came upon me, at a moment when I least expected her, among women who gave rise to doubts in her mind of my sincerity. She held my youth and my thoughtlessness against me; but her fine blue eyes fixed languishingly on mine

belied her mouth. I saw quite well that I was loved; but I was no further advanced for that. The Duchess of *** really had principles, and, of all the women whom I won in my youth, she it was who caused me the most trouble. She esteemed her husband, although she did not love him; she was persuaded that a woman owed everything to her duties; but sooner or later the most reasonable woman will fall into folly; and I was the stumbling-block which Heaven, that laughs at the vain resolutions of men, had placed in the path of her romantic notions of virtue. I was annoyed by her resistance, and the more she put obstacles in my way, the greater was my eagerness to overcome them. She had been one of the witnesses of the scene that had taken place at the Duchess of Burgundy's, and she thought—as, too, did all those who were with her—that the readiness of the duchess to forgive me meant that there was an intimate connection between us. I saw that this was the rival she feared most; and I did my best to undeceive her. Yet I was exceedingly vain of the opinion that had got about: the heiress to the throne in my toils! This idea filled me with pride, and I denied the thing in such a way as to let people believe that the rumour was not without foundation. I said no, and left my interlocutor persuaded of the contrary, and at the bottom of my heart I was firmly convinced that, although the Duchess of Burgundy had not yet been added to my conquests, this was not so very far off.

Yet my business with the Duchess of *** went no farther forward. I would go and seek consolation for

her rebuffs with Madame ***; but often my need sent me to her; and disgust drove me away from her sooner than I had intended. The desire to possess a fresh woman destroys all the charms of the woman you have. Besides, you know them, and you have not yet admired the others; and I confess that nearly always the impatience to possess them gives them the illusion of what they have not, which is soon destroyed.

One day, when she told me that nobody could trust me, that the vows I made to her were copied from the same model as those I went round repeating to every pretty woman, I flung myself at her feet to assure her that my heart furnished me with new and altogether sincere vows for her. A burst of laughter was her reply, and she added that it was impossible to lie with more brazenness. At first, I was disconcerted; but, regaining courage, I took her hand, kissed it, and, bending over it a long time, I rubbed it gently against my eyes. My position and the slight rubbing caused the red to come to my cheeks; I thought of the saddest things, and little by little my eyes filled with tears. I then raised my head to show them, these precious tears that were rolling down my cheeks.

"I do not love you!" I said to her in a tone that appeared to come from the heart. "Look at your work; these are the first tears that love has drawn from me, a love so ill-rewarded, a love that makes me wretched! Before now, I have had desires, it is true, but the only true attachment I have known is for you".

That, as near as I can remember it, was the speech

I made, and I uttered it in a broken voice to give it greater value.

The duchess, astonished and moved, could not yet believe her eyes; mechanically, her cheek approached mine, and received the delicious proofs of my affection. Sighs followed; she raised her lovely eyes to Heaven, then, fixing them on me, she said to me in a voice that would touch the soul:

"You love me, then, I cannot doubt it. . . . Dear Fronsac, how dangerous you are!"

Her head fell back on to my shoulder; my lips covered her with burning kisses, and soon her own were employed otherwise than in speech. I confess that that moment was one of the most delicious in my life. It was interrupted by the noise of a carriage—her husband, she feared. I retired, cursing all busybodies and intruders, and saying to myself:

"She is mine!"

Since then, I have often thought how persuasive is the gift of tears in love. I was extremely satisfied with myself for having provoked it in me, and I have been at pains to use it on more than one occasion. Once the habit is contracted, you weep easily enough, and there are some women on whom it has a marvellous effect.

I was pleased with myself. More in love with the duchess than I had ever yet been, I watched for the favourable moment to seduce her; it seemed always to fly me; and I was very much annoyed at this. At last her husband, who had an important post at Court, was entrusted with a special mission in Languedoc,

and the Duchess of ***, who loved quiet, obtained from the Duchess of Burgundy permission to spend some time at a country place she had near Mantes. I flew to Mantes the moment I learned this. The duchess had already been there some days when I arrived; several very amiable ladies were keeping her company, and I found that I was the third man.

I was very well received. The duchess blushed, and for some days avoided every occasion of being alone with me. The woman was fighting against herself, and, though I was becoming impatient, it made me laugh up my sleeve to see her virtue struggling with her love. I foresaw quite well that the former would not fail to go under, and I prepared to pay myself handsomely for so long a wait. Finally, the happy day, the charming day, arrived.

Ever since my arrival, we had sought every means to enliven the company; I had banished that air of languor which had already come upon them, and every day we invented games, nearly always childish games, in which we amused ourselves with pretty pranks. I had already played several practical jokes on several women, and they were on their guard for fear of surprises.

They went into committee, with the duchess at their head, to pay me back. It was decided to take out the partitions of a room near mine, and to replace them in such a way that with a slight effort they would fall; they were pierced all over with holes, and cords were passed through, which were attached to certain pieces of furniture, so that by a pull on the cords from a neighbouring room the furniture could be moved at will.

All that remained to be done was to have me shifted from my room, without my suspecting the reason. In the evening, the curtains were taken off my bed, into which water was poured; rags were burned, and the word went round that the floor-polisher, when taking water to my room, which my lackey had asked him for after dinner, had set fire to my curtains without noticing it.

The alarm was spread by servants who had been taken into confidence, and I arrived in my room, which was still full of smoke; I saw that my bed was drenched. After everybody had cried out how fortunate it was that the accident had had no consequences, since it might have led to the burning down of the house, if care had not been taken, they decided that it was impossible for me to sleep in the room, and they had my things carried into the one that had been prepared to avenge my tricks. The women congratulated me on not having lost anything; joy was painted on their faces, and I attributed their apparent satisfaction to the interest which I thought they took in me. I could not know that they were savouring in advance the pleasure they had promised themselves. I was, I confess, without the slightest suspicion, and I myself complimented the Duchess of ***, who smiled, on the fortunate turn things had taken.

We supped gaily; but the company had scarcely returned to the drawing-room when they talked of going to bed. They pretended that the accident that had happened in my room, although it had had no consequences, had none the less frightened them

at first, and that they were feeling the effects of this fright; they complained of headache, of tiredness, and, instead of sitting down again, as usual, to play, they went off one by one, and the drawing-room, which was never left before one or two o'clock, was deserted at the latest by eleven.

I went to my new room for want of anything better to do. It was so placed that my lackey slept at some distance from me. After having read for a time, I put out the light, and thought of my dear duchess. I did not want to leave the country without having had certain proofs of her affection, and I promised myself firmly not to let slip the slightest occasion that presented itself. Filled with these ideas, that satisfied my imagination, I went to sleep.

I was immediately awakened by a noise I heard; an armchair that was near the window was rumbling heavily towards me. I sat up. The noise went on.

"What's that?" I asked.

Nobody answered, and at that moment a water-bottle placed on the mantelpiece fell to the floor with a crash. I could not understand what it all meant. I jumped out of bed, and having, I suppose, no other intention than that of leaving the room, I touched with my leg a cord that had got out of place; I followed it with my hand, and I soon saw what was afoot. I got into bed again, and remained quiet. I heard sounds of laughter on the other side of the partition, and at the same time I felt water being squirted on to me.

To protect myself, I pulled my bed aside and placed the curtains between the wall and me; I also

made fun of the actors, and shouted to them to think of something better. Everything stopped all of a sudden; but another noise followed on the first: the blows of a hammer announced that something was being knocked down, and I was waiting for this noise to finish, when suddenly the whole partition fell to pieces like a scene in an opera. Imagine my surprise at seeing eight or ten women, with their hair dressed for the night, all armed with a cup full of water, who made a circle round my bed, and who, saying that it was so warm that I needed refreshment, threw the contents of their cups into my face. I hid myself entirely under the bed-clothes.

"He's afraid!" I heard them say. "Good! We must punish him for the tricks he has played on us: more water!"

"No, no!" cried another voice; "we must tie him to his bed, so that he will have to ask our pardon to-morrow morning before he leaves it".

I was not altogether easy; and it came into my mind to retaliate on them. I gently took off my shirt, and, jumping precipitately out of bed, I appeared before the ladies in the costume of the worthy Adam when he was in the Garden of Eden, before he had been disobedient.

This apparition brought shrieks from everybody; the sight of the devil would not have caused a band of nuns just coming from confession to fly more quickly than the sight of me set these women a-scamper: it was, in fact, devil take the hindmost. Most of the lights were put out in this flight, which I accelerated

still more by shouting that I was going to seize one of them to keep her with me.

My bed was drenched, and I thought that it was only fair to go and take possession of that of one of the ladies. They had sought refuge in the drawing-room, and I went up a side staircase, which I did not know, but which led me by a slight turn, of which I was unaware, into the duchess's room. Nobody was there; everybody had been employed in preparing the booby-trap they had made for me. I did not hesitate; I got into the bed, entering it by the alley-way so as not to be seen. I then placed myself between the wall and the bed, with my head hidden, so that it was impossible to suspect anything. I was not very big, and I would have defied anybody to have noticed that a man was there. My heart beat with impatience and desire. A few moments later, the duchess entered.

"What Monsieur de Fronsac has just done", she said to her maid, "is something more than a joke".

It was agreed, however, that I had been somewhat badly treated, and, as the talk went on, the preparations for the night advanced. I gently lifted the bed-clothes, and from time to time I caught sight of the duchess, who behaved with entire freedom, since she thought herself alone with her maid.

My exalted imagination embellished all that I saw; the smallest details of her toilet had a more seductive effect on me than anything I had experienced until then; I was in an inconceivable state of intoxication, and I kissed the bed-clothes for want of something better. The duchess thought she felt something

crawling over her; her maid looked, and put her almoſt into the ſtate in which I had been in my room when I jumped out on the women. I devoured with my eyes what I was already eager to feel and caress. Venus, whom the painters make so beautiful as she rises out of the sea, would have meant nothing to me. The duchess seemed heavenly to me, and my heart beat so fiercely that I was afraid I might be ill.

At laſt she got into bed. I scarcely dared breathe; I kept ſtill and huddled in a small corner. I did not take up much room, and I should have liked to have taken less. She asked for a book. I was in torture. The maid left the room, shut the door, and I was left alone with what was dearest to me in this world. I was torn between the desire to approach her and the fear of frightening her. I was ſtifled under the covers, which had been put back into place; I presumed that my duchess was reading; I heard her sigh and then murmur my name.

I ventured to put my head gently out of the bed, where I could ſtand it no longer. My duchess, absorbed, did not notice this; she went on reading. A few minutes later she placed the book on the bedside table.

" No", she said, " people do not love like that ".

Then a sigh. She had her head turned in the direction away from where I was.

" Ah !" she went on, " men are born for our undoing".

A silence.

" That I should be in love with a child !"

Another silence.

"At least, for my peace, he will never know it".

I waited until the candle was put out; but I could not hold myself in any longer. I threw myself upon her. A cry, which I stifled by placing my hand over her mouth, was the first sign of her fright.

"It is I", I said to her; "don't scream! It is Fronsac, whom you love, who adores you, and who is with you".

She tried to pull the bell-rope; I held her hands; she began to weep, and implored me to go away. My reply was to enfold her in my arms. Despair took possession of her; I saw that the moment was coming when I should be compelled to leave her. All the names customary on such an occasion were flung at me; but, despite her resistance, I was soon so guilty that she became afraid of compromising herself by making too much noise. Love was the conqueror, and my vows had more effect then than they had ever yet produced. A delicious night, the memory of which, after more than thirty years, still gives me great pleasure! A virtuous woman who goes astray is more tender than any other.

The duchess gave herself up with all the less reserve to the feeling she had for me because she had fought against it so long. I loved her at that moment in such good faith that she thought me sincere: love alone now ruled her actions, and, after a few sighs and the regrets of an expiring virtue, she abandoned herself completely. She experienced, as I did, for the first time the pleasures that a great passion alone can give, and four hours passed without our having found time

even to tell the other that we loved each other. Finally, intoxication gave place to sober thought. The duchess remembered that we were locked in, and also perceived that my state of nakedness made it necessary for me to regain my chamber before day. Fear followed this reflexion, and the tears began to flow: my duchess thought herself a lost woman.

For the moment, even I was at a loss to know how to extricate myself from this difficulty, and anxiety had completely dispelled my pleasure. I thought I might jump from the window; but, in the state of nature in which I was, I could not very well dare take the risk. The duchess herself was frightened at the notion, and begged me not expose her reputation by attempting anything so dangerous; besides, I might injure myself, and this idea increased the tender solicitude of my dear. Finally, Heaven, that always protects lovers, inspired in me a stratagem that saved us. I returned, proud and exultant, to the duchess's bed. She was still weeping and crying:

"What have I done!"

I reassured her, and told her that my good genius would soon relieve her of her perplexity. Love little by little calmed her fears, and made her forget once more our moment of alarm. She had so much charm and seduction for me that I could not prevail upon myself to leave her. We talked of prudence, and forgot it the next moment in new caresses. Finally, reason asserted itself, and the duchess, following my plan, rang for her maid. The interval was not lost. I sealed her mouth with a vow of eternal constancy.

I meant then what I said; but man is too weak a creature to keep a promise given at a moment when his agitated senses prevent him from realizing its full import. The maid arrived in a fright at having been rung for so early in the morning, for it was not yet five o'clock. The duchess complained, as we had agreed, of a violent pain in the ſtomach, and asked for some lukewarm, sugared water. The agitation through which she had juſt passed gave her an air of languor and pain, which took the maid in completely; she thought the duchess looked very ill.

During this comedy scene, I was hidden in the spot where I had awaited so impatiently for the duchess to come to bed, only I was calmer now. My roving hand pressed more or less the objects that it met as a sign of approval of what the duchess said or did. The maid offered to rub the duchess's ſtomach to relieve the pains; to be refused, as you may well believe, by the duchess, who insiſted on her fetching the water she said she needed. This girl was intolerable with her excessive show of concern.

"You muſt have caught cold yeſterday evening", she said; "and, if it had not been for the tricks that were played on His Grace the Duke de Fronsac, you would not be in this ſtate".

I thought her reasoning juſt, and I pressed the duchess firmly; but she made a movement to show her impatience with me. Finally, the woman put an end to her remonſtrances. She was told to run away quickly and heat the water, and not to be long in bringing it. The duchess added that, to save time,

she was not to lock the door. The silly woman, still lamenting, hurried off to do as she was bid.

As soon as she had gone, I came out of my hiding-place, and softly made my way on tiptoe to the door, to listen if I could hear anything. When I was assured that I could leave without being seen, I took the little backstairs that had led me so fortunately the evening before to the duchess's room, and climbed them with the speed of a man who does not wish to be seen. On my arrival in the corridor that led to my room, a noise of a door opening caused me to hide in a cupboard where wood was stored; unfortunately, it was full up, so that I was very uncomfortable, and I even ran a splinter into my foot that hurt me very much.

This misadventure was due to a great rascal of a lackey who slept near the lobby of his master's room, and had got up early to smoke a pipe at his ease at a window in the corridor; I was certain of this because I heard the noise of his tinder-box. I was losing my temper, and I heartily consigned the lackey to the devil; I almost cursed my good fortune, I was suffering so from my foot. To add to my troubles, the twigs of the faggots of wood tormented me, and at every movement I made they threatened to tear my flesh. I was a quarter of an hour in this painful position, and it was one of the most disagreeable times that I have ever spent in my life. Being unable to stand this unhappy situation any longer, I resolved to leave the accursed wood-pile at any cost, even if I were discovered. I came out softly; fate was kind to me:

my eternal smoker was leaning out of the window, and consequently had his back to me. I passed by him without his hearing me, and I promptly got into my own bed, which one of the servants had re-made after my escape; for my lackey, who slept at some distance from me, and who had not been informed of what was intended against me, had heard nothing.

Fatigue soon sent me to sleep, and it was eleven o'clock before I awoke. They had had the goodness to let me rest, and, although the luncheon bell had sounded, they had not come, as usual, to scold me for my laziness. I found the women all together again. The first thing they had to say was to reproach me for having made them blush the night before; I did not fail to reply that when you were not the stronger you were forced to be the more cunning. My pardon was very soon sealed with embraces all round, and they even asked me for news of my night.

" It was delicious", I said to them; " you would not believe, ladies, how great was the happiness you procured me by interrupting my sleep and forcing me to fly from the deluge of water which you so generously poured on me".

I then told them that I had taken refuge in the garden, where, sleeping almost as I walked, I had had one of those dreams that are so charming that reality could not be preferred to them. I gave them allegorically an account of my night with the duchess in such a way that only she and I could understand. The ladies laughed very much; the Duchess of *** endeavoured to imitate them, and blushed from time

to time. At the end, they said that I was a very agreeable story-teller, and they condemned me for my levity of the evening before to tell them each morning a story of my composition; for they took everything I said for an invented tale.

I assured them of the truth of it all; and I concluded that it was not so easy as they thought to have such pretty things to tell them every day. I complained of my foot, telling them that it had not been all happiness for me, since, on retiring from this place of delight, after the dream, which must have occupied a long time, I had nearly crippled myself. In truth, I did limp a little, which served to confirm my misfortune. They all sympathized with me, and were very sorry for having been the cause of my flight into the garden. I was not to be pitied, I cried, and, going up to the Duchess of ***, I said to her that I would remember for the rest of my life the way I had been treated in her house: they had meant to play a trick on me, and I had been well served. The blushes of the duchess would have betrayed her, if there had been any suspicion of my new connection with her. Virtuous women are so awkward and unskilled in love affairs that it is easy to guess the object of their attachment. The Duchess of *** saved herself from embarrassment by talking to me about my foot, and I saw that she was really anxious over what had happened to me.

I was so pleased with myself, my heart was so full of my adventure, the Duchess of *** seemed to me so attractive, that I should have liked all the world to have been informed of my good fortune. I was proud

of my possession of her, and I confess that the secrecy imposed upon me by honour weighed on me enormously. They bantered me on my jaded appearance; I replied, laughing, that it was impossible to have done so many things and not to be a little fatigued; they agreed, and soon all retired to dress.

In the evening, I tried to obtain from the duchess's love what chance and my boldness had procured for me; but she made an objection of the maid, who was accustomed to carry off the key of her room, and I was forced to pass the night in my own. I was not so ill-pleased over this, because I was beginning to feel the need of rest.

On the following day, as soon as the duchess had risen, I purloined this wretched key, which the maid kept in her possession at night, and, exulting over my theft, I mounted my horse, and went off to a locksmith's at Mantes, where I had a duplicate made[1]. A louis hastened the diligence of the workman, with whom I stayed until he had finished his job, and, proud of my idea, which gave me the entry of the duchess's room, I returned promptly to the house, before anyone had had time to notice my absence. I had, however, been sufficiently long for that eternal and solicitous maid to have discovered the loss of the key; they were looking for it everywhere when I arrived, and I was very careful to leave it on an armchair in the duchess's room, on going up to wish her good-day. Everybody was being asked about the key; finally, one of the ser-

[1] See Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (*Dangerous Acquaintances*, translated by R. Aldington, 1925), Letters 84, 88, 96, etc.

vants found it on the chair where I had slipped it without being seen, and tranquillity was immediately restored.

In the evening, the amusements in the drawing-room were resumed as usual, and I surpassed myself in my pranks. Bedtime arrived; and I made no effort to have a quiet word with the Duchess of ***. Even my eyes were dumb; nothing in me indicated any desire to obtain further favours; she was reserved; but, despite all her efforts to appear gay, I saw on her face an annoyed look, which my pretended indifference had brought there. I left her coldly, and waited in my room until the golden hour should sound for me. At last, it came. When I thought everything was quiet, I took the stairs I had gone down two evenings before with no intentions whatever, and softly tried the key, which opened the door to me through which I was burning to pass. The duchess was in the dark; but she was not asleep; she thought it was her maid who had returned.

"What do you want, Vincent?" she asked. "Have you forgotten anything?"

I went up to her bed without replying, and, embracing her, I was very careful to make myself known to her, so that she should not be frightened, as she had been the first time. She was at first extremely surprised to see me in her room, and was even rather angry, believing that I had suborned Vincent, who alone had the key; she was afraid of being at the mercy of her servants. I was already in her bed; but my kisses had no power to dispel her ill-humour. I was

compelled to tell her how I came by the key that alarmed her so much.

"What a head!" she cried. "Oh, my dear, you are very knowing already for a young man; you will go far on the same road, and I shall not be the only one to be pitied".

I interrupted this fine prediction, and peace was soon made between us: the woman who loves is always eager to believe anything favourable to her passion.

A week passed thus deliciously, and each evening, with the consent of the duchess, I made use of my key; I left her in the early morning, and there were no unfortunate encounters that might have revealed our intrigue. The duchess was mine entirely, and loved me in good faith. I have caused her many sorrows, with which I still reproach myself; but, unfortunately, so soon as I went away from her, I forgot all my vows. If I had remained long in the country, I think I should have been faithful to her all the time; but the sight of a new object always made me forget the one that was no longer before me. I returned to Paris, and my duchess was often forgotten. We did not part without making each other all sorts of fine promises; she was more punctilious than I in keeping them, and this brought upon me later a string of reproaches that ended by wearying me. When she stopped plaguing me, I became her true friend; I owe her much, she gave me excellent advice, and I lost her too soon.

On my return to Paris, I gave myself up to new pleasures, and I followed the torrent that carried me along with the other young men of my age. The

LOUISE ANNE DE BOURBON

(Mademoiselle de Charolais)

[face p. 48

Duchess of Burgundy, whom I had forgotten, seemed more amiable than ever to me; her kindness encouraged me to further follies, and I turned over in my mind the means of bringing about what I desired.

It was at this time that my father, who had no great tenderness for me, notified me that it was absolutely necessary for me to marry; he was uneasy over the rumours about me, and, in agreement with Madame de Maintenon, who was his adviser, and my stepmother, he had resolved to put an end to my gallantries. He thought that the possession of a wife would be an inducement to me to give up the others, and he concluded, very unwisely, that Mademoiselle de Noailles[1], his wife's daughter, would make me lead a more orderly life.

My father's sermons on my conduct seemed to me all the more out of place because his own had not been very regular. There is no lack of people ready to inform us of the follies of our parents, and I knew a good number that did him no honour. He complained of my neglecting him. He thwarted me constantly: this was no means of drawing me towards him. Old men, if they want to be sought after, should be amiable; gloom and ill-temper drive youth away. He went to such lengths that he communicated to me an insuperable distaste for Mademoiselle de Noailles, and I swore that I would have no posterity by her; it is one of my vows that I have most scrupulously kept. Madame de Maintenon, whom I revered, also exhorted me to amend

[1] Anne Catherine de Noailles, the daughter of the old Duc de Richelieu's third wife, widow of the Marquis de Noailles.

my conduct; she pointed out to me that it would irritate the King, who did not like people openly to display dissolute morals; that I might be forgiven a few wild oats, on account of my age, but that soon they would become an intolerable libertinage. She added that I was causing my father much sorrow, and that the first duty of a son was to be obedient. Heaven was also brought in, and, to appease the celestial anger, and especially the King's, which I feared much more, I gave my word to Madame de Maintenon that I would do all that was required of me. My marriage had been settled some time, to the great satisfaction of my parents, but not to mine, when I wrote to the Duchess of ***, telling her that they wanted absolutely to marry me, and all my sorrows on this score. She proved to me how virtuous she was by urging me to yield to my father's will, and by begging me to live with my wife as a husband should. I replied that my resolution was taken, and that nothing could alter it; that I would obey; but that I should be a husband *ad honores ;* that my heart was hers, and that my wife would have of me absolutely nothing but the hand I was forced to give her.

On the evening of my marriage, I lay with Madame de Fronsac; the whole house was celebrating the event; but she had no occasion to perceive that she had a husband. In appearance, I did what was expected of me; but, alone with her, I kept the promise I had made to myself. Madame de Fronsac, though quite young and innocent, was not unaware that there was something more in marriage than that, and she seemed

much astonished, especially after we had been together for a few days, to find me still as calm and as incurious as on the first day. Her melancholy air did not render her any more attractive to me. There were doubtless some few complaints made; and the mother and the daughter exchanged confidences that were certainly not favourable to me. My stepmother was first of all tart and sour towards me, and then went to the opposite extreme; she overwhelmed me with kindness, was eager to please me in everything, and, in a word, courted me for her daughter's sake. I was delighted to see her punished for her stinginess to me, and for forcing me into marriage without having consulted me; I pretended to meet her in everything; I seemed to be on the point of acceding to her wishes, and I was vastly amused at her credulity, which I was cheating all the time.

I had forgotten the Duchess of *** for the Countess of ***, and both were neglected when I was with the Duchess of Burgundy. This princess, although far less pretty, inspired desires in me that I could not master. It seemed indispensable to me that I should possess her; I lacked something; and I resolved to try every means to reach my end. I kept my eyes constantly upon her; I sought opportunities to touch her hand, and sometimes I seemed to read in her look that it gave her considerable pleasure to see me.

Meanwhile, the storm gathered over my head. My frequent appearances at Court, where I went only for the Duchess of Burgundy, added every day to the suspicions people had of our intrigue. The princess

was always saying nice things about me, and spitefulness added poison to everything she did. Her slightest word was a proof of love, and I confess that mine were rather calculated to convey the thing that was not. The King was informed of the rumours that were going about; luckily, he found very little truth in them; but he thought it due to his honour to punish a subject capable of attracting public attention on so delicate a matter, which compromised the reputation of his granddaughter. Madame de Maintenon, who had been the recipient of the complaints of the whole of my family regarding my conduct towards my wife, had not failed, on the instigation of my relatives, to inform the monarch of my behaviour. It was decided to punish me by a forced retreat for a time, and the retreat chosen was the Bastille. I was peacefully pursuing my pleasures and my hopes; the Duchess of Burgundy seemed to be always on the point of succumbing, although no declaration of any kind had passed between us. I thought, for no particular reason, that she loved me, and illusion blinded me to such a point that this phantom of my imagination had become a reality for me. The readiness I had found in nearly every other woman confirmed this notion in me, and I expected my triumph to come at any moment.

In the midst of this fine dream, I woke up in the Bastille. For some days, I was in a state of dejection impossible to describe; my mind was all topsy-turvy and I was unable to guess the reason for such severe treatment. Accustomed as I was to a life laid in the pleasantest of places, it was impossible for me to think,

without horror, that I must live in a dark room, barred in on every side, unable to leave it except for two hours a day to take air. The governor had orders to prevent me from receiving letters of any kind; I communicated with nobody, and, in the centre of Paris, I was dead to all my acquaintances. My reflexions were of the gloomiest, and the memory of my past amusements rendered the den I languished in all the more odious to me. I tried to suborn the jailer who brought me my food; but he did not deign to reply, and threw me a look of contempt. I should have punished the knave in any other situation; but, adapting myself to this, I did not think it beneath me to beg of him. I promised him a hundred louis, if he would deliver a few letters I would give him, and would bring me back the replies; he threatened to speak to the governor about it, and I was forced to desist. I swallowed my grief, and went to bed early to shorten the day, and it was in this prison that I contracted the habit of sleeping a great deal, a habit I still have, and one that is very necessary to me.

My thoughts turned very much to the Duchess of ***; I should have liked to write to her, to give her an account of the unfortunate position in which I was. I loved her as on the day when I had hidden myself in her bed. Captivity inclined my heart to melancholy and tenderness; in perspective, I saw fidelity as a charming thing, and I should have regarded it as a happy fate if I had been permitted to live with her in a desert, without any other women, but free. Liberty would not have been too dearly bought at the price,

and I would have signed with my blood an engagement to keep to one sole woman. The metamorphosis that took place in me was strange. The memory of the Duchess of Burgundy also occupied my mind, and charmed a few moments of my solitude. Sometimes, I imagined that she had been asking my pardon of the King who had shut me up, and the door of my prison was never opened but that my heart was moved by this sweet hope. I was still convinced that I was loved; but I was beginning to regard my own love as a temerity; I even condemned my own follies. A month of this enforced retreat had already opened my eyes, and I could not recall the past without a little shame.

From what I have told you of the Duchess of Burgundy, you can see that her kindness to me was nothing more than very great indulgence. Surrounded by an etiquette and respect that wearied her, the princess had been amused by the repartees of a young man who rushed in where angels feared to tread. My levity, my manners, everything seemed new to her; she was by nature of a lively disposition, and she seized with pleasure on this opportunity to amuse herself; she was kind, and it did not occur to her that a child, as she called me, could injure her reputation. Her familiarity with me made people believe that her heart was touched; I was convinced of it myself, and if, once more, I had often been with her, her rank would have disappeared in my eyes, and I should have seen in her only the pretty woman.

But I must do her memory the justice due to it: I

was never her lover[1]; I very much desired to be her lover, and I should have made further attempts to be so, but for the fatal order that tore me from the Court. I was never able to read far enough into her heart to know whether it did indeed speak for me; but, thus much is certain, that it never caused her to take one step that I could have interpreted as showing love for me. I may have suspected her; but I have never been certain. Court and Town opinion credited me with more, and I candidly confess that I did not go out of my way to disabuse it. Even after her death, which occurred soon afterwards, I did not think it would do any harm, since she was no longer alive, to let people believe anything they liked on the subject, and I was even vain enough to relate to some of my comrades things that had not happened to me. There is much satisfaction in this kind of vanity; we take pride in a conquest we have not made when it will throw lustre upon us; we boast of it, and are even vain-glorious about it, as though this pretended glory added something to our pleasure. It gratifies our self-conceit, and takes rank with other conventional satisfactions.

In spite of these heart-searchings of mine, I was annoyed at being reduced to desiring this further triumph; I was disconsolate at not having completely earned my punishment; for I was beginning to suspect

[1] This might seem to tell in favour of the authenticity of these Memoirs, for if they were a forgery intended to discredit the Court, here was an opportunity to throw mud at the Royal Family. However, since it was generally believed that Richelieu was not the Duchess's lover, it may have been a mere precaution on the forger's part.

that my great intimacy with the Duchess of Burgundy had been the cause of my imprisonment, and, if you are punished, it is at least a consolation to have deserved it.

My education had been greatly neglected; with people of our sort, rank is always enough; and so they conceived the notion of making my enforced idleness profitable to me. Madame de Maintenon, who really wished me well, obtained permission for me to have a companion in my solitude; a man of merit, capable of giving me good advice, was sought for. The Abbé de Saint-Remi[1] was chosen to console and instruct me; he consented to share my captivity, which was softened by half with a companion in misfortune. Little by little, study became a pleasure with me, and I profited by it more than I had ever done until then. Work soothed the agitation of my senses, and I was as happy as it is possible to be within four walls.

One day, the door of my prison was opened at an hour that was neither that of exercise nor of meals; as I had not lost hope, I thought that some good news was about to be announced.

I caught a glimpse of a woman's dress; this sight made me start with pleasure; I had not seen a woman for several months. I rose to meet this woman, who threw herself into my arms. . . . It was my wife, Madame de Fronsac![2] The illusion vanished instantly; I took her by the hand, and, with a respectful

[1] " A learned and pious ecclesiastic".

[2] Bernaville in a letter to Portchartrain, May 14, 1711, definitely says that Fronsac (Richelieu) asked that his wife might visit him.

air, begged her to take a seat. I pretended to be gay, and asked her laughingly what divinity had enabled her to enter the kingdom of the dead. She told me that the King had instructed her to inquire whether I would promise to live a quieter life, and that my liberty was the reward for my conversion.

"I did not know", I replied, "that I had the honour of conferring with the ambassadress of a great King".

And, after that, I was doubly polite and respectful. This was not altogether what my wife was expecting. They had calculated that, if she were allowed to come to see me in prison, my youth and the austerity of my manner of living would force me to treat my wife as a good husband should, and my liberty depended on this reconciliation. I found this out afterwards, and I confess that, if I had known it at the time, the desire to be free might very well have led me to break my oath. I merely thought it was a trick to recall me to duties I had sworn never to fulfil. It amused me to resist the impulses of my senses, that urged me so strongly after a long privation, and I resolved to treat Madame de Fronsac as a woman I ought to respect.

I saw from her eyes that my politeness did not satisfy her; her vexation became apparent. After holding back for some time, she thought that caresses would have more effect on a husband who had been deprived of them for so long. She came up to me, took me by the hands, and told me, in a voice charged with emotion, how sorry she was for me in my imprisonment. She informed me that she had been heart-broken when she had heard of it, and that, if her

prayers had been of any avail, I should have soon been free, or at least my prison would have been made so convenient in every way that it would have been more tolerable to me. But she added that the King was inflexible, and that, but for my extreme youth, his resentment would have taken him farther still. His indignation was such that he did not wish to have my name spoken before him, and it was only after a promise had been made on my behalf that I would live a more regular life in future that he had at last allowed himself to be moved; but he demanded proofs of the change, and the first proofs were that I should live on good terms with my family, who were very much attached to me. As she uttered these last words, she gave me a very tender look; her tears began to flow; her head drooped, and repeated sighs showed the agitation in the soul of Madame de Fronsac. Involuntarily, I took her into my arms; I received a few kisses wet with tears, and my senses fought for her in a very victorious manner. I was no longer so much my own man; I had seen nothing but men for so long, and Madame de Fronsac was a woman, although she was my wife. Enforced continence makes a man all the more susceptible to the other sex; my brain was turned; and I was forgetting all about my resolutions when Madame de Fronsac, who saw that her hour of victory was at hand, cried:

"Ah! my dear, if you had always treated me like this, you would not be where you are".

These words acted like a talisman on me, and everything changed. My brain became cool again; before

me there was only my wife, and I was ashamed of having been on the point of yielding to her. I started away from her with dread, as though I had been on the edge of a precipice; I blushed at having exposed myself to losing in one moment the fruit of all my plans. My self-esteem was wounded, so true it is that it commands us always! My wife's astonishment cannot be described, she did not know to what to attribute this sudden movement away from her; she saw the success of her little stratagems destroyed, and I confess that she had behaved towards me with all the art of a woman who wishes to subjugate a man. She was modest and virtuous; she was ignorant of the tricks employed by so many women accustomed to live in the maelstrom of the world, and determined to accomplish their ends; yet nature had taught them to her. You might say that all women are born with a grounding of skill and cunning, which develops at the right time and place; the simplest is as shrewd as any other where her heart and self-esteem are concerned.

Madame de Fronsac remained in her chair as though she were crushed, without even arranging the slight disorder of her dress. For my part, I blamed myself, not for her sake, but for mine, for having led her so far; and, with my chin resting on my hand, I stood there without proffering a word. After a long silence, I went up to her, and told her how sensible I was of the concern she had shown for me, and that I would not forget it; and, as her tears began to flow again, I said that she should not abandon herself to grief, that my captivity would come to an end, and that the

King would do justice to my innocence, and would not punish a few escapades by a long imprisonment. I added that I was not guilty (here the lady frowned), and that I should soon see the end of my retirement.

" I hope so, indeed", she cried.

She said no more; but her eyes were expressive; they seemed to say: is that all you will do to obtain your freedom! Their mute play lasted some time; but finally pride conquered love; she rose, and sorrowfully bade me goodbye. I conducted her to the door, still very respectful, and I exulted at having allowed her to leave me as she was when she entered. When I was alone, I could not help laughing over the scene that had just taken place; I was more pleased with myself than if I had obtained the favours of several fresh women, and why ?—because I had set my heart and mind on not living with my wife.

I must nevertheless confess that, of the women who had been kind to me, there were more than one who were no more attractive than she. Madame de Fronsac was young, and could lay claim to better treatment than mine; yet I was inflexible with her, and I lost her without her having had from me anything more than the name of wife. I am perhaps the only man who has ever been imprisoned in the Bastille whose liberty depended on his good or bad behaviour towards his wife, and it is very amusing that this place should have been chosen to effect with mine a reconciliation which, according to all the probabilities, ought to have taken place. It was necessary to have a character like mine to upset plans so well-laid.

It was not long before I discovered that Madame de Fronsac's report had not been favourable. I was treated more rigorously than I had ever yet been; it seemed as though the faces of the people I saw carried upon them the marks of displeasure; my jailer's looked harsher, and the Abbé himself gave me to understand that the King was more angry than ever with me. I plunged into work again to banish the tedium of my existence and the reflexions that thronged in upon me from time to time; I translated Latin authors, and was quite astonished to find that I was almost learned. I am convinced that a little longer retirement would have accustomed me to study, for, before entering the Bastille, I could not read for a quarter of an hour at a stretch; I thought only of pleasure and women. That time did me a great deal of good, especially when I was ambassador at Vienna, where I had a very extensive correspondence, and where it was necessary not to be frightened of work.

My literary occupations were interrupted by a very serious illness, to which I almost succumbed. Smallpox declared itself a few days after a very violent fever. I was at death's door; my life was despaired of, and I owed my recovery entirely to my having been bled, in the middle of the eruption, by the advice and under the supervision of M. Delécalière[1], despite the opposition of several other doctors who had been called in. Madame de Fronsac received permission once more to come and see me from time to time, in order to

[1] Dr. Carlière, the Bastille physician. All this about Richelieu's illness is strictly accurate.

attend to me; but her care for me was not so interested as it had been on her first visit.

Youth soon triumphed over the illness that had laid me low, and I recovered my usual health. Further councils were held at Madame de Maintenon's, to pronounce upon my fate; it was decided to send me to the army, in order to break me of the connections I had contracted. It was thought, after what had happened, that my reconciliation with Madame de Fronsac could be effected only by the passage of time; they saw that my headstrong character would not brook a direct attack, but that it was necessary to appear to yield, rather than to attempt to bend me to their will. They counted on the future, but the future betrayed their flattering hope.

Liberty seemed to me the greatest of all boons; it was as though I saw everything around me for the first time in my life; it was all new to me. I was intoxicated with joy, and the order that had been given to me to leave Paris and join the army of Marshal de Villars was incapable of spoiling my pleasure. My father received me with ill-temper, and delivered me a sermon, which from his mouth affected me not at all, and I left Paris delighted to be my own master again, and to be embarked on a new career. I had written to the Duchess of ***; and her reply had convinced me of her anxiety for me and of her attachment. She had been ill, and appeared inconsolable at not being able to embrace me before my departure. I was inconsolable myself over it; but everything had been prepared; the King's order forbad a longer stay in Paris,

and I was obliged to set out, without having satisfied this need of my heart; for imprisonment had led me to appreciate the duchess at her true worth, and reason had shown me how much superior she was to the other women I had known.

As I was changing horses two leagues away from Paris, a peasant, who was waiting for me at the post-master's door, handed me a note; it was from the Duchess of ***, and contained merely these words: "*I am at Hunter's Inn*". I did not hurry there—I flew. I was not expecting such happiness, and we fell into each other's arms the moment we were together. We remained thus for a long time without being able to utter a single word. She looked very ill. When the first transports were over, she informed me that she had been unable to resist the desire she had to see me; although she had not yet recovered from her illness, she had found strength enough in her love to leave her house by the little garden gate, and to go and hire a carriage; that she had not wished to take anybody into her confidence; that she was well aware of the anxiety her absence would cause; but that, as her husband was at Versailles for a few days, she would easily discover means to disarm suspicion. She had found out the time of my departure, and had preceded me by an hour.

If the Duchess of *** was very much in love, she was also just as much afraid of losing her reputation, and it was this fear that had induced her to expose herself alone, in spite of her natural timidity, in order to avoid being compromised.

I fully appreciated all that she had done for me, and I could not thank her enough in my first burst of gratitude. I soon passed, however, to a more tender feeling. We had not seen each other for a long time; the Bastille had placed insurmountable barriers between us; I needed to be happy; I was adored; nothing ought to have opposed my desires; and yet I met with a resistance from the Duchess of *** which I certainly did not expect.

"A woman who has shown you as much love as I have done", she said to me, "who has sacrificed to the inclination that draws her towards you principles of virtue which she thought impregnable, would act with ill grace, when she has exposed herself to every danger in order to embrace you before your departure, if she refused you those favours which she has no longer the right to deny you. I am yours; it is your conquest you hold in your arms—a woman who breathes only for you, but who, because of the love you inspire in her, fears all the more to lose you. I know you; I do not shut my eyes to what you are; and I know that the presence of one woman makes you forget what you owe to another. Your reason goes astray, and your senses are always ready to betray your vows of fidelity. As your mistress, I shall lose you; that is undeniable. I cannot love by halves, and love is exacting. What seems charming to you for a few hours becomes tedious to you by long possession; your affection will end, and mine, I know, will follow me to the grave. I shall be unhappy: that is what will be the end of the romance that seems so seductive to you now. Be reasonable,

and, as the price of the esteem you say you have for me, restrict yourself to friendship; it is more indulgent. I will be the depository of your secrets; you will not fear to confide them to me; I shall have no reproaches to make to you; and I shall always share your pleasures and your pains. You will need a friend, and will fly the mistress. My dear Duke, it is necessary to my peace of mind for me to see you always, and this is the only means of holding you. I know that the part of chief actor is better than that of confidant; I am of an age to play the first part; but I prefer the latter. It is the excess of my attachment for you that has made me adopt this course, which seems strange to you, but which reflexion has convinced me is that which will most certainly bring me peace".

The Duchess of *** spoke to me with so much sincerity that I was almost persuaded that she was right. The accent of truth that rang through her discourse impressed me, and I saw quite clearly that it was no effect of that art of coquetry which women use with so much skill in order to make themselves desirable. The Duchess of *** had no need of this; she was virtuous by conviction, and weak owing to the irresistible inclination that drew her towards me. Her heart had conquered her reason; but from time to time a conflict took place within her that cast a shadow on the happiness that love should have brought her. I confess that I was often amused by these conflicts, that served merely to prove how great an ascendancy I had over her, since I was always the victor.

Though I had been held back a moment by what she had said to me, my desires spoke so loudly that they alone were now heard. The Duchess of *** seemed to me more beautiful than ever; her air of languor added a further degree of interest to her charms; I was burning with desire to investigate them; it was, so to speak, a novelty for me, after so long an absence, and I had the same impatience to possess as on the first occasion. The Duchess of *** still resisted; but her refusals were so feeble that they announced a further defeat for her. Soon love triumphed over the fear of making an inconstant lover, and, in her pleasure in the present, she was no longer in any state to reflect on the dangers of the future. Two hours passed so quickly that we could scarcely believe that they had flown. We had to part. The Duchess of *** could no longer put off her return home; she even showed some anxiety on the subject, and, far from sharing it, I was so satisfied with the moment I was enjoying that I could think of nothing else. Finally, I had to pay some attention to the reason of her fears, and, mad and merry as always, I suggested a rather amusing way of getting over her difficulty: it was to tell her people that the Patron Saint of Paris had appeared to her several times, that on the last occasion, after having drawn the curtain of her bed, she had blessed the remedies that had been employed during the Duchess's illness, and had said to her as she departed for the celestial sphere: "*Pray without ostentation and in secret, and acknowledge the hand which the Supreme Being has used to prevent you from sinking into the grave that was ready to devour you*".

The prophetic tone in which I pronounced these words made the duchess laugh, and me too. My imagination seemed to her fertile in miracles; but she could not at first understand how this fine dream could supply her with a plausible reason for leaving the house. I explained to her that nothing was more simple; that the words of the saint meant: Go and thank me in my temple, but go there without ostentation or followers; and that, to carry out this order, she had gone out alone to do homage to the saint. Whence masses and candles and everything that accompanies religious thanksgivings; and certainly a whole morning was not too much for the fulfilment of these pious duties. She told me that I was mad and impious; nevertheless, I think she took advantage of my madness.

It was, however, difficult for us to separate; we were like those lovers of Molière's, who, in seeking to fly each other, keep running into one another. The Duchess of *** urged me to write to her, and promised to inform me of anything interesting that happened at Court or in Town; but, remembering that I was setting out for the army, she could not restrain her tears; the dangers I was to incur struck her imagination, and I could pacify her only with difficulty.

"You are going", she said, "to join the army that is the sole hope of the kingdom; but you know nothing of the discouragement of the troops; the name of Villars himself, who commands them, will not reassure them when they see that they are against Prince Eugène, that general who is so often the victor. I foresee nothing but defeat; the end of our King's reign

is dreadful. How harsh a fate would be mine, if, while deploring France's losses, I had also . . . !"

She could not finish; she swooned in my arms. I was very much embarrassed; I wanted no witnesses of this scene. Fortunately, she recovered consciousness little by little; and this was just as well, for I was beginning to find it burdensome to be too much loved. I assured her that her fears were without foundation, and that it had been predicted that I should live to be very old. The Duchess, though fearing for my days, had the courage to exhort me to distinguish myself.

"In the career that you are about to undertake", she said to me with a sigh, "it is permissible to be prudent; but you must not fly from danger . . . Goodbye", she added, leaving me, "do not forget me, and be happy".

I conducted her to her carriage, and her eyes remained fixed on mine and mine on hers until we could no longer see each other.

This encounter, which had first of all given me so much pleasure, left me, after her departure, with a void that took all my good humour away. However, the desire I had to see the army and to obtain advancement quickly soon drove away the melancholy in which I was plunged.

The memory of the kindnesses of the Duchess of Burgundy, of whose unfortunate end I had been apprised, also distracted my mind from what had just passed between the Duchess of *** and me. I regretted this princess, who had deigned to single me out; the illusion that had given me the hope of sub-

jugating her had not yet disappeared; and I was extremely sorry that the tomb had swallowed up all my hopes. The loss of those we love gives them, after their death, more precious qualities than those we knew in them during their life. I could conceive of nothing finer than the princess, and, in spite of myself, the tears filled my eyes. I still heard the cries of woe that fell on my ears at the news of her death; I saw the funeral procession conducting to Saint-Denis the dear remains of the unfortunate princess, now united once more with the bodies of her husband and her son. All France appeared in mourning, and at that moment I shared it in truth. Measles had carried off to the grave all that was most amiable.

The French, who are idolaters of their masters when they can perceive in them the least grain of virtue expected everything of the princess. Her husband, the Duke of Burgundy, had an austerity in his principles that the graciousness of his wife would have mitigated; they both wished to do good; and it was in the nature of both to feel that the first happiness of a sovereign is in the love that is borne him. They had under their eyes the example of the evils that can be wrought by too great ambition; and it was their firm intention to stay the tears of the people. The people knew this, and their affliction was extreme. They seemed to have lost their father; in Louis XIV., whom they had so much admired, they saw no more than a king overwhelmed by misfortune; they were impatient to pass under the yoke of another master, and the Duke of Burgundy was the one they revered in advance.

The French always expect a reduction of the taxes from the heir to the throne; but they are mistaken. It is a prudent thing that they should be sufficiently burdened; it would indeed be very bad policy not to keep them always extremely busy in earning their livelihood; too much ease and leisure would give them time to think and reason; they would end by knowing their own strength, and you can guess the insubordination that would be the result, an insubordination which is, in truth, easy to reduce by the shedding of a little blood, but which should always be prevented[1]. The French, who are intoxicated with joy at the advent of a prince to the throne, love him less a little while afterwards, and end by hating him, and I am convinced now that the Duke of Burgundy, who was so much mourned, would have followed the beaten path; he would have been obliged to do what his son's ministers have carried out, and, even if he had not committed the same mistakes, there would have been others to reproach him with; for the people must break the idol they have worshipped.

These reflexions, often interrupted by less sombre ideas, carried me a long way, and I reached the army with my mind still filled with politics, love and regrets. I soon found distraction in continuous employment. Marshal de Villars, to whom I had been strongly recommended, gave me no time to think of anything else but my trade; I often went to pay my court to him, and I strove to profit by his actions and conversations.

[1] Here certainly is the note of anti-aristocratic propaganda. Richelieu may have thought this but would scarcely have expressed it so boldly.

I found the career I was entering upon very much to my taste, and, if it has been my good fortune to have succeeded in it, I owe much to the masterly lessons I received. Everybody knows the famous campaign of 1712, that immortalised Villars and saved France; the celebrated battle of Denain and the taking of the magazines of Marchiennes on the 24th July repaired the fortunes of the Kingdom. Eugène, whom everybody thought would at any moment penetrate into France, was forced to fly; after that, there was nothing but victories, and it was my good fortune to begin my service with so glorious a campaign. I will not weary you with further details; they can be found everywhere, and you know them as well as I do[1].

I had received several letters from the Duchess of ***, telling me of the King's anxiety and his domestic griefs. They had tried to make him leave Versailles, so great was the fear that Eugène would enter France! The Duchess of *** was still dear to me; but she had been right in fearing absence and in preferring to be my friend; I thought only of glory, and I hoped, by distinguishing myself, to deflect in my direction one of the rays of glory surrounding Marshal de Villars.

The Duchess of *** had kept to the resolution she had proposed to take; she spoke little to me of love, much of friendship, asking me to be quite open with her; it was impossible to find occasion to leave a woman like that; I have, therefore, always had with her a fairly regular correspondence. I knew by her of the mar-

[1] Richelieu attracted Villars's attention by his courage and dash, qualities which cannot be denied the Duke.

vellous effect produced by the winning of the battle of Denain, and of the annoyances to which Marshal de Villars was still subjected, even in the midst of his successes. They did not slacken during the whole campaign, and I did not return to Paris until I was sent to announce the taking of Landau and of Freiburg[1].

I was no longer that thoughtless, light-headed youth who had accustomed himself to see in the King only another man; my stay in the Bastille had shown me who was master, and I approached him with the greatest timidity. However, I summoned up courage enough to pull myself together, and he seemed satisfied with my account. He was kind enough to tell me that, if I went on, I was destined for great things, and this compliment gave me a feeling of pride which it was not easy to repress.

The Duchess of *** was not forgotten, but this time I found the friend, and it was not possible to re-establish the mistress. It was not ill-humour that made her act thus, but a deeply thought-out scheme to attach me to her, and her refusals were so gentle and tender that I did not press my claims for fear of distressing her. Besides, I had begun another intrigue that promised me keen pleasure.

I had seen in the rue Saint-Antoine the wife of a looking-glass-maker[2], who seemed heavenly to me;

[1] Landau was captured July 22nd, 1713, and Freiburg, 21st November, 1713.

[2] Madame Michelin. Whatever trimmings may have been added by the French editor, Faur (?), the substance of the episode is authentic. In 1798 a play on this subject was produced in Paris.

she was a blond of about eighteen years of age, who had been married to a man with a rather large business, and he, being very much older than she was, had not found the art of inspiring her with love. This woman, who had a tender heart, had turned it to God, not finding any human creature worthy of possessing it, and it was for this heart that I sought to vie with Divinity. I had learned all these details by one of my servants, a clever fellow, who had been to spy out the land in the quarter. I thought that her resistance would not be of long duration, and I made it my business to be seen regularly at Saint Paul's, where she went every day to hear Mass. I sought to approach her, and one day I had an opportunity of speaking to her about the baptism which had taken place of a child whose mother had been murdered by her husband.

This tragic story, which made a great sensation, enabled me to enter into conversation with my blond; I deplored the fate of women, which exposed them to the tyranny of certain men, and I ended by saying that women, who were weak in themselves, should inspire in men only the desire to do homage to them; that this timid and shrinking sex had been made for our happiness, and that, in gratitude, we should endeavour to make women happy. I perceived that my shopkeeper's wife heard me favourably, and I had reason to be satisfied with this first interview. I noticed that she had blushed several times while speaking to me, and I augured from this that the puritan had found me to her liking. Every day at Mass, I invented some new means of seeing her and talking with her, and it

was an appointment we made with each other, without her perceiving it. I asked permission to go and see her; she made an objection of her fears that my visits might displease her husband, and I promised myself to make the acquaintance immediately of this redoubtable husband, who turned out to be the best fellow in the world. I went and cheapened mirrors with him, of which I pretended to be in need; I took measurements and bargained at length. The first time, I left without buying anything, and I returned another day when he was out. I spoke first of all of my purchase to the wife; then I passed on to compliments. She was pretty, and every woman likes to be informed that she is so. I told her innumerable stories that amused her very much, and, while jesting, I said to her that I was madly in love with her. My puritan was not very much offended; the language I used was new to her, and probably she found that I possessed the art of painting love more agreeably than her dull-witted husband. One of her friends came in, and interrupted a conversation that promised very well. I left her, and did not go to Mass on the following morning; I wanted to see what effect my absence would produce. She reproached me on the following day; I pretended that I had been unwell, and, as the weather was very lovely, I proposed that we should go for a walk on the boulevards. She refused, saying that, however much she might have liked it, her reputation was dearer to her. I saw that a favourable opportunity would give me possession of what I desired. However, these eternal masses wearied me, and I resolved to have

furnished a small apartment in the quarter, in order to bring matters quickly to a conclusion with the woman. I thought it was only decent to let the husband have the profit of the furnishing; and he provided me with furniture, looking-glasses, and was very pleased with me. I had been careful to hide from him who I was, and I paid immediately everything I owed with money I had borrowed from the Duchess of ***, for my father, who was very short of money himself, kept the strings of his purse extremely tight. I dined with the worthy shopkeeper, who laid the cloth in his best room for me, and I took advantage of a moment when he was obliged to be absent, because he was wanted in the shop, to kiss his wife.

As the days went by, it became more and more evident that I was loved; but I was no farther advanced for that; my puritan was afraid of damnation, and my eloquence was not persuasive enough to rob her of her fears. I was not in love myself; but I was annoyed that a shopkeeper's wife should keep me so long at bay. I resolved to take by assault the fortress that would not capitulate. I awaited my opportunity, and the Duchess of *** unwittingly furnished me with it.

She had just had a new wing built to her country house, and wanted it furnished quickly; I proposed my shopkeeper, who was accepted. I went and informed him immediately of this good news, and you can judge of the thanks of the worthy man, who did not guess that, in obliging him, I had no other object than to get him out of the way. His wife also seemed to me to appreciate the trouble I had taken to procure

them so good a customer. The husband set out for Mantes, and I established myself the same evening with his wife, thinking that I should fill his place completely; but my inexorable blond compelled me to leave her before supper. I most heartily consigned her to the devil she feared so much; I swore that I would cut short all these formalities, for I could not conceive what a woman who loved could do better than to surrender. I had a letter written by a wench, so that the writing should be in a feminine hand, in the name of the Duchess of ***, who informed Madame Michelin—that was this woman's name—that there was another piece of furniture she wanted; and that she begged her, in the absence of her husband, to accompany the bearer to a certain place, where she would be given a length of material that was being embroidered, and then to go on to the duchess's in order to discuss with her the use to be made of it.

My confidential man, who was not known, carried this letter in the name of the Duchess of ***, and, to enhance the importance of his message, I had a very clean carriage hired, which was to take Madame Michelin to the place where she was awaited. This attention, which was attributed to the Duchess of ***, produced all the effect I desired. The shop-wife put on her best clothes, and told everybody that she was going to call on a duchess. She wanted to take with her a woman friend, who lived in the same house, and who would have waited in the carriage; luckily, she did not find her at home, and Madame Michelin, to her great regret, set out alone.

My man had orders to take her to the apartment that I had had furnished, where I awaited her with some impatience. She arrived, and, instead of finding the embroidress she sought, she perceived me in a small closet, seated on a sofa, with a book in my hand. She gave a cry, and wanted to withdraw; but my man had shut the door on her. I took her in my arms; she tore herself away, and, flinging herself on her knees in the middle of the closet, she raised her hands to heaven, supplicating it to come to the aid of her innocence; but heaven was deaf, and I too went down on my knees.

"You are praying to heaven", I said to her, "but I, who dare not address my prayers so high, make them to the charming creature I have before my eyes. She must see how much I worship her, and I expect of her good will my reward for my most tender attachment. It has seemed to me", I added, "that my dear one feared the world, and she should perhaps be obliged to me for having covered our connection with an impenetrable veil. We two alone will be in the secret, and heaven willingly pardons a hidden sin".

I tried to put myself in the way of committing it; but I was met immediately with an outburst of anger, which frightened me at first, and which I allowed to die down. She was tiring herself a great deal, and I drew the conclusion that her resistance would become progressively less. Now she implored me to let her go; now she assured me that, if I took advantage of her position, remorse would kill her. She confessed that she loved me, but it was innocently, without

wishing to do wrong. She acknowledged that she would be happy with me, but that she could not, without offending God, betray the husband she had. Grief, unfortunately for her, made her more attractive, and I was determined to come out victor in this combat. I wanted, moreover, to punish her for a few scratches she had given me. She still maintained a pretty strong resistance; but, as we struggled, I gained ground little by little, and I could see that the time was not very far off when her virtue must expire. I confess that I had a long and furious assault to deliver, and perhaps my only reward would have been a barren fatigue, if her senses had not betrayed her conscience. Madame Michelin was very passionate and inflammable, and her resistance was really an effort of virtue.

Soon the gates of hell vanished from her eyes; she could only see the delights of paradise, and I was then convinced that a puritan could love with as much enthusiasm as she loved God. Every time her intoxication died down, remorse seemed to torment her; I tried to keep it at bay; but finally I felt that I was lacking in victorious arguments to bring peace to the soul of Madame Michelin, and I was obliged to abandon her to her repentance. I made her promise to come when she could to my apartment. I told her that everything there should be known to her, that the furniture came from her shop, and that nothing was strange to her, not even the master. She adjusted, sighing all the while, the disorder of her dress. I made her repeat that I should obtain another time, of her own free will, what I had been forced to wrest

from her, and I then let her go sadly to the carriage that awaited her.

I had the curiosity to call on her an hour later at the shop, to see what was happening. I found the neighbour, who had returned, and who, informed of the visit to the Duchess of ***, was inconsolable at not having been in the carriage with her friend. To throw dust into the eyes of this woman, I complimented Madame Michelin on this increase of fortune; I told her that it would certainly lead her farther than she thought. Madame Michelin spoke but little, and attributed her silence to a headache she had. Her look painted the agitation of her soul; now it was furious when fixed on me, and now it became tender, love alone appearing. I cracked innumerable jokes with the neighbour, and said to her that it seemed as though the company of the great was too much for Madame Michelin; the friend agreed, and assured me that she would be overjoyed if such an adventure had happened to her. Madame Michelin endeavoured to appear less melancholy; but tears came into her eyes and betrayed her, and she retired on the pretext of taking a rest.

I was several days without seeing her; the husband had returned, and seemed delighted over the business I had procured for him. He had learned at the duchess's who I really was, and he treated me with the greatest respect when he saw me. The conversation turned on the apartment that I had had furnished, and he said to me, laughing, that I wanted it no doubt in order to play in it a few of my tricks.

" His Grace the Duke", he added jokingly to his wife, who appeared to be ill at ease, " His Grace, who has a palace, goes and spends some hours in a modeſt lodging; but love embellishes it for him; for you can quite imagine that it is not to thread pearls that His Grace the Duke takes ladies there".

With that, he shouted with laughter, pleased with what he had said. His wife did not appear so satisfied with his coarse gaiety. She made a parade of calling me " Your Grace", and I perceived that her vanity was tickled at the idea of having a lover of my rank.

The husband returned with his furniture to Mantes, and left me with his charming better half; she was not yet at peace with herself, and ſtill fought againſt her inclination. However, on my telling her over and over again that all the wrong would fall upon me, that her ſtruggles honoured her in her own eyes and in mine, she seemed calmer.

Besides, I was careful to enliſt her senses in my aid, and in this way I had far less trouble to persuade her. I turned her head in order to drive away her remorse. At each of her visits, this was the firſt thing I had to do.

The neighbour had chattered about the visit that Madame Michelin was supposed to have made to the Duchess of ***, and she was very anxious because her husband might learn that there had been no actual message given for goods. The husband might thank the Duchess of ***, and I decided to inform her of what had happened, so that Madame Michelin might be safe from suspicion. The duchess heard me with

LOUIS FRANÇOIS ARMAND DU PLESSIS

Maréchal Duc de Richelieu

(From the statue by Pigalle in the Louvre)

[*face p. 80*

great composure, lifting her eyebrows from time to time.

"So this", she said to me, "is another victim of your wildness! Poor woman! How I pity her, if she loves you as much as your story would lead me to believe! She will pay very dearly for a few moments of intoxication, and, if she is anything like me, she has many tears to shed".

This little sermon tired my patience; she noticed it, stopped her moralising, and became once more the affectionate friend. She promised me to serve the little shopkeeper's wife, as she called her, and bade me soothe her. She begged me to treat her always as a friend, and never to keep anything secret from her; but I perceived, nevertheless, that what I had confided to her gave her pain. The duchess had renounced all intimacy with me; it was, as I have said, the fear of losing me that had constrained her to restrict herself to friendship; she had judged that my flighty nature could not be held down, and that, by demanding too much of me, she would end by having nothing. She had had to struggle often with herself to obtain this apparent calm, for, at the bottom of her heart, love was not yet extinguished; if she could have been assured of my constancy, or at least of not losing me altogether, she would have again given herself up to the inclination that dominated her. There are very few women that, loving as she did, are mistress of themselves to this extent, and who compel their love to take on the yoke of reason. The Duchess of *** habituated herself to suffering, and ended by hearing with less impatience

the stories I told her. I saw her often; her extreme indulgence rendered her dear to me, and I remained her friend to the day of her death. If she had behaved differently, there is every likelihood that she would have been added to the number of those women whom I abandoned completely, and whom I merely encountered sometimes by chance or in the same company.

The good Duchess of *** assured me of her friendship for Madame Michelin, and promised me, moreover, to send for her, so that the husband might be entirely without suspicion. It was easy for me to guess that there was a certain amount of curiosity in this charitable offer; but, as it mattered very little to me what means was employed to soothe Madame Michelin, I heartily agreed to this visit. It did not displease me either to give myself an air of importance with the woman, and to let her see that I was having her treated with some distinction. A luncheon was arranged for the following Thursday, and I took the news to my shop-wife. The dear neighbour was with her; she was wonder-struck at the honour being done to her friend. She could only exclaim:

"How lucky you are! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Such a thing has never happened to me. To lunch with a duchess! . . . You must make yourself look nice, my dear; I will help you to dress. . . ."

In short, all the small talk of people of her kind was volubly given forth by the neighbour, who seemed to regret very much that she was not in her friend's place.

Having been occupied with Madame Michelin, I had given little heed to Madame Renaud, the name of the friend. She was a widow, and was possibly twenty-two years of age; she had brown, vivacious eyes that gave a pleasing liveliness to her face. I had always seen her in undress; but on this occasion, a more studied elegance made another person of her to my eyes. I found that she had a nicely shaped figure, a perfectly well-set neck, and the prettiest of hands, to which I had paid no attention, and I was annoyed with myself for having been so tardy an observer of the beauties I was discovering for the first time. I determined to make amends for the slight I had done them, and to place myself in a position to judge more particularly of that which was hidden from my sight. I treated Madame Renaud with greater respect, and conveyed my regret to her that I was unable to arrange for her to accompany her friend; but, inwardly, I swore that she should take lunch and lie with a duke to recompense her for not having been included in the invitation of the Duchess of ***.

Madame Michelin was very grateful to me for what I had done for her; and, for the first time, I saw an unmixed pleasure shine in her eyes. It increased soon after, chance helping me. I was present when one of the servants of the Duchess of *** brought her a note from his mistress. This note, which was very polite, asked her to come and give an opinion on some materials and at the same time to luncheon on the Thursday, as we had agreed. I thought this note would turn the head of the two women; they bowed low to the lackey,

and Madame Michelin begged him to tell his mistress that she would obey her commands on the day appointed. This was the first time I had had occasion to observe how proud people of this class are when they have an opportunity of any intimacy with us, and, since then, I have seen shopkeepers and financiers ruin themselves for the honour of being admitted into our houses, or of receiving us in theirs.

Madame Michelin insisted on having a new dress, and, although there were only two days left, it was absolutely necessary for her, she said, to have some more fashionable attire. She invited her neighbour to go out with her on this errand, and I am certain that the whole quarter knew the same day of the shop-wife's good fortune. I left them; but I had an opportunity of squeezing the hand of Madame Renaud, who, beside herself, returned the pressure. I surmised that her resistance would not be very great, and I regarded this woman as a prize that could not escape me.

I handed her, on the following day, without my puritan's perceiving it, a letter in which I declared that I was in love with her, and that the visits I was paying to Madame Michelin were merely in order to see her, and I begged her to indicate some means by which I could convince her in private of the sincerity of my affection. This letter was taken and hidden with the greatest care; I judged from the transport with which it was received that the answer would not be unfavourable.

On the Thursday, Madame Michelin was at the

duchess's when I entered; we had arranged that I should not go and fetch her, in order to avoid giving rise to talk in the quarter, where I was beginning to be known. The Duchess of *** told me that she was gratified to know Madame Michelin, that she had excellent taste, and that she had given her advice about her furniture that pleased her infinitely. The lunch was very gay, and, if Madame Renaud had been invited, I might have compared myself to Love among the three Graces. The Duchess of *** could not keep her eyes off Madame Michelin; her decent appearance gave her pleasure, and, in fact, it was difficult to have a more civil air. These two women had very much in common; both being weak without being wanton, they had yielded to the irresistible inclination of love; both tormented by remorse, they needed the presence of the person loved and the charm of love's pleasure to silence it; they were always making further sacrifices of their wisdom to love. Madame Michelin forgot herself sometimes, and gave me very languishing looks; the Duchess of ***, who was watching her attentively, perceived them, and her face showed the impressions they made upon her. She seemed to be sorry for the puritan; her face expressed interest and pity. "Poor woman," she seemed to say, and tears came into her eyes, brought there, no doubt, by the memory of the pain my levity had caused her. If I had been alone with her, I could not have resisted the desire to make her forget her resolution, so seductive did she then appear!

A letter was brought in, which she had to answer; she asked permission to retire into a cabinet, and went

away to write. She was not displeased at this opportunity of being alone with her agitation.

Left with Madame Michelin, I began by embracing her. The Duchess of *** had lit up my senses with a fire that had to be extinguished. When my desires were violent, I saw no obstacle to their satisfaction. I calculated that the duchess would give us time enough, and I treated Madame Michelin as though she belonged to me. It seemed delicious to me to enjoy her almost in sight of the duchess and on the very couch on which I had sworn to love her; but, to carry out so well conceived a plan, which was often realised subsequently, it was necessary not to be dealing with a puritan; mine trembled, implored me to behave myself, and made so much noise that I was obliged to let her be, for fear of creating a scandal. These women with prejudices are always timid; their head must always be in command of their actions; they cannot take advantage of an opportunity; they are only good at sentiments, and, consequently, they soon become tedious. I was furious with her, and I sought out the duchess, and told her that I was forced to leave her owing to urgent business. I said goodbye very coldly to Madame Michelin, who seemed overwhelmed and stupefied at my retirement.

My senses still commanded me; I remembered that Madame Renaud had not seemed very cruel, and I thought that I might easily find in the brunette what I had just missed in the blond. She lived, as I have said, in the same house as Madame Michelin. I took care not to be seen by the assistants in the shop, and

I climbed up to the second floor, the home of my divinity. My good genius had sent away an old cook, the only servant of my peaceful widow. An errand in another quarter was of marvellous service to the urgent need I had of being loved. Madame Renaud gave a cry of astonishment when she saw me; I was at pains to point out to her the sacrifice I had just made in leaving Madame Michelin at the duchess's.

"I pretended that I had urgent business", I said to her, "and my urgent business is to place my love and my liberty at your feet".

Women are nearly always subjugated by vanity; Madame Renaud thanked me a thousand times for having preferred her to the other ladies; she was only grieved that I had surprised her in undress. I assured her that she was all the more lovely, and she showed her pleasure immediately in her looks. I noticed that she had begun writing a letter; she tried to keep it from me; I insisted on seeing it.

"Will you be any further advanced", she said to me in a tender voice, "when I tell you that the letter is addressed to you?"

At the same time, she gave it to me to read. It was all about her fear that she was not loved; it was not altogether a positive avowal; but I was assured that I had been singled out, and that it was not because I was a duke that I had been found altogether amiable. I put the letter in my pocket and kissed Madame Renaud very heartily. She tried to speak; my mouth stopped the flow of her words. The bed was near at hand, and Madame Renaud, who was not expecting

so sudden an attack, cried out when she felt that she was falling on to it. She defended herself but ill; astonishment robbed her of her strength, and all that she could say to me as I became more and more enterprising was:

"Oh! Your Grace! Oh! Your Grace!"

His Grace had senses that were speaking too loudly for him to take any notice of these exclamations, and the brunette benefited by the desires that the blond had so keenly roused. Madame Renaud was very soon in the state in which I was myself when I began to attack her so boldly, and she abandoned herself frankly to a pleasure that she shared. I had to suffer no reproaches; she assured me of a most tender attachment, and told me that she considered herself a lucky woman to have attracted the attention of a man like me. Madame Renaud had had one or two respectful lovers of the lower sort; but she had granted them nothing, according to what she said. She was of opinion that I was in every way the kind of man to seduce women, since I spared them the preliminaries of defeat.

"The fault has been committed", she said, blushing, "if it is one, before you are aware of it".

I was very soon Madame Renaud's hero, and I felt myself in all decency obliged to give her further proofs of my feelings for her, which the lady received with all possible complacency.

It was agreed between us that we should see each other as usual at Madame Michelin's, and that we should then arrange our future meetings in her rooms to renew the assurances of our love. I quitted her

pleased with her, and she was still more satisfied with me.

I left the alley in such a way as not to be seen from Madame Michelin's shop. She had returned; and, making a circuit, I retraced my steps, and went in to her. I approached her coldly, and told her that it was impossible to behave worse with the man you loved; that the greatest proof of love a woman could give was to submit to all the desires of her lover. Madame Michelin looked at me sadly without replying, and I went on with my reproaches, assuring her that the visit I had just made was a necessity to me, to appease the voluptuous sensations she had aroused. The good lady was far from imagining what had just happened to me; she thought that a walk had made me calmer. She excused herself by alleging the respect she owed to the mistress of the house in which she was, and still more the fear she had had of being surprised; she did not possess, she said, that self-abandonment that enabled people to ignore the proprieties, and she thought I was very unjust to blame her for having behaved irreproachably. I became more angry, assured her that she did not love me, and went on in such a way that my worthy puritan, beside herself, sought every means to placate me. She even proposed, for the first time, that I should invite her to take something in my apartment. It was easy to see how much this proposal cost her, and I took care not to accept it. My session with Madame Renaud had given me a desire for rest rather than for making an assignation. Madame Michelin, in despair at my

refusal, renewed her entreaties, but they were useless; I held firm, and the woman thought it was anger that made me so severe and inflexible. I perceived that at any moment she would forget herself completely in front of anybody who might see her from the shop. I left her disconsolate at my flight; but I was myself pleased to be no longer an actor in a scene that was beginning to become very embarrassing for me.

As soon as I was alone, I amused myself in reflexion on the oddities of women's conduct. If you show them too much eagerness, they become less affectionate, or, if they still have some principles of virtue, they weary you with their regrets and their repentance. The moment you become indifferent, their affection blooms again or their remorse vanishes; it would seem that their wounded self-esteem is the strongest passion that can occupy them; it will cause them to act with greater folly or to make more advances than love itself can inspire them to. A woman led by self-esteem is capable of anything, and women have been known who, after having resisted the most seductive lover, have given themselves to the man who had offended their pride by some doubt regarding beauties he could not see. The desire to prove that she is beautiful has caused more than one woman to yield, and the skilful man who knows how to take advantage of the weak side of a woman, whoever he be, is sure to triumph over her.

The worthy Michelin returned for a couple of days to Paris, and thanked me continually for the honour I had procured his wife.

"A lady", he said, "of the rank of Her Grace the Duchess of *** to descend to us!"

While he lost himself in demonstrations of respect and gratitude, his wife was on the alert to see whether I was still annoyed. I pretended to be gay, but I avoided looking at her, and in no way sought opportunities to speak to her in private. She did not know what to make of my coldness, and resolved to have an explanation with me. She cast about for means to be alone, and to send away her husband, who wearied her extremely. No woman, however religious she may be, is lacking in wiles to rid herself of a witness who is a nuisance; and Madame Michelin, no less skilful than any other woman, made a pretext of important business in the Faubourg Saint-Germain to send her husband away. He started off, making a thousand excuses to me, which I could have well done without.

He had scarcely gone, when his wife, coming up to me, took hold of my hands, and, with tears in her eyes, said:

"If it had not been for Your Grace, I should still be an innocent woman; I should never have known pleasures that must be priceless when they are enjoyed in all good conscience; but at least I should be quieter in mind. You have made such a change in me that I cannot find words for it. You are unaware that, when I am alone, I nearly always weep for the loss of my virtue! When I am with you, you rob me of all reflexion, and my transports are so great that I am no longer mistress of them; but, when I am by myself once more, repentance comes and poisons the illusion.

For the last three days, jealousy, grief, and still more my attachment for you have driven away those ideas that destroy my peace of mind. I burn to give you every proof of my love; your anger increases, if that is possible, the intoxication you inspire in me when you are alone with me. I need your love to become myself again; and you treat me with the utmost indifference. I try to read your eyes, but they avoid mine. Wholly given up to those feelings which you probably no longer entertain for me, I propose to you to go to your apartment; you do not know how much that request cost me; and I had the pain of seeing it cruelly rejected. Ah! Your Grace, I have not lived since that moment; your contempt is dreadful to me; I may be guilty in my own eyes, but not in yours. My sin is your work, and it would be barbarous in you to punish me for it".

Madame Michelin delivered her speech with so much animation that she touched me somewhat. Outraged love gave her a natural eloquence which until then had not shown itself, and I was pleased with myself for having furnished her with an opportunity of exhibiting it. I told her that she was silly to work herself up as she appeared to have done; that she must have seen that I still loved her, since I had tried to convince her of that love at the duchess's; that her prudery had put me in a bad temper; and that it was for me to complain, not her. I took her hand, I pressed it, and her face brightened; I saw my pardon written in her look, which fixed itself very amorously on me. How were we to consummate our peace. The husband was leaving on the following morning, and I proposed to

Madame Michelin that I should occupy his place in the conjugal bed; she rejected this as impossible. But the more she made difficulties, the more I insisted on their being overcome.[1] I became annoyed; she feared another scene, and promised to do the impossible to meet my wishes. What she apprehended most was one of the shop-girls, who slept in a closet next to her room, which she was obliged to pass through to go to bed. This girl might easily notice something, and the reputation of her mistress would be lost. She could not be sent to sleep elsewhere. What was to be done? Madame Michelin swore to me that, but for this difficulty, she would consent to everything, although this step caused her much pain; but she added that I must see that it was impossible to occupy her husband's place, unless I found a means of doing it without danger. I reflected some time, and the woman seemed very anxious over what I was about to say.

"To-morrow", I said to her, pressing her against my heart, "I will be your husband. Nothing is easier than to rid yourself of the fear of that girl; you must put her into such a good sleep that she will not waken. I will call on my apothecary, and order a sleeping-draught which will do her no harm, but which will be a sure guarantee that she will not disturb our pleasures; she will owe to us the best night's rest she can possibly have".

My sleeping-draught frightened Madame Michelin; but, finally, I persuaded her that opium, given in a small dose, could not be harmful, and, after some

[1] So likewise Laclos's Valmont.

resistance, she promised to mix this somniferous dose in the wine the girl would drink at supper. She was relieved at having made peace with me, and she acknowledged that this talk had lifted the heavy weight off her mind.

During this interval, Madame Renaud arrived. I had not seen her since my first visit, and I busied myself with a comparison of my two lesser divinities. The blond had a more regular beauty, a sweetness in all her features that added to their charms, the loveliest hair in the world, and, what was rather astonishing, very dark eyelashes and eyebrows. What could be seen of a pretty throat filled you with a desire to see more. Madame Michelin, in spite of these advantages, needed to be animated by pleasure, and it had to be aroused in her. Madame Renaud, on the contrary, inspired it, she provoked it in you; there was no need for effort; it was she who did everything. She was as lively in love as in conversation. She was not so fair-skinned as her friend, but the colouring of her complexion was more animated; her eyes, breathing love and gaiety, were a perfect contrast to the languorous look of Madame Michelin. You felt that after a long love conversation with the latter, Madame Renaud would have found the means of making you begin another conversation on leaving her; you would probably have been dumb with the puritan, even though you had not seen her for some time.

A woman who came in to cheapen some furniture, and who forced Madame Michelin to go into her shop, satisfied Madame Renaud's impatience to be alone

with me. She handed me a long letter, and told me that she had been thinking continually about me, and that, not having been able to sleep during a part of the night, she had amused herself in writing. I appeared very sensible of her kind remembrances, and I asked when she could permit me to thank her more privately. I immediately formed the plan of making one night of it with the two neighbours, since they lived in the same house, and I proposed to Madame Renaud that I should share her bed on the following night. The brunette was complacency itself; my will was a law unto her, and it was agreed that she would wait for me until two o'clock in the morning, as I could not arrive earlier, according to what I told her, because of a ball one of my relations was giving. I concluded that I should have time enough to make my peace with my puritan, and to keep this new assignation afterwards.

Madame Renaud, a careful woman, did not forget to give me the key of the alley, and to add that I was the first man since her husband who had caused her to forget her duty.

" For, after all", she said, smiling, " what I am doing is very wrong; but why have you the art of turning wrong into pleasure ? Above all, be very careful with my neighbour, she is religious; I know her, she is really religious, and I would answer for her virtue. She would have nothing more to do with me, if she suspected that I had had any weakness for you. She is in her youth what I propose to be in my old age. Heaven is always ready to forgive us our sins, and you

make me commit such pretty sins that forgiveness ought not to be difficult to obtain".

Madame Michelin's return stopped a flood of words, of which I can give only a very small part, and, soon afterwards, I left them, greatly pleased at having so well disposed of the employment of my time.

I returned on the morrow to the shop-wife, to whom I handed the drug I had ordered, which was to send to sleep a great, ugly shop-girl she pointed out to me. I could not help bursting into laughter at the trick I was going to play on her. I warned Madame Michelin that it was not possible for me to stay with her all night, and that I could keep her company only until two o'clock. I expressed my regrets, which she thought were sincere, at leaving her so early, and I urged her to send her people away early, so that we could come together at eleven o'clock at the latest. She promised to do this, and above all to be careful to see that that sleeping-draught was taken which was to procure us undisturbed enjoyment. She handed me a key similar to that which Madame Renaud had given me the evening before, but her hand trembled. She was not so bold as the other, and I left her provided with a double key to the house.

The Duchess of ***, on whom I called, asked for news of Madame Michelin, and sang her praises to me. She told me that she had found out, from the conversation she had had with her after my departure, that the woman was really virtuous, that, like herself, she had doubtless been carried away by an inclination she could not govern, and that I certainly had a charm

to make myself loved. She urged me to have some consideration for the woman, although she was placed in a class inferior to mine, and said to me in favour of Madame Michelin everything that she might have said for herself.

I confess that this unusual conduct in a woman who was in love heightened my esteem for her, and re-awakened in me fires that it was never very difficult to relight for her. I thought no more of the blond or the brunette; I forgot my engagements for the night, and I proposed to the Duchess of *** to give them up entirely. I showed her the key which was to assure my sharing the bed of my puritan. I did not mention the other assignation, being a little ashamed of revealing all my plans to her; I merely gave her an account of Madame Michelin's struggles with herself before consenting to grant me this night, and I added that I was ready to sacrifice to her the price of these struggles, if she would make it up with me again. I repeated to her that it was only she whom I could love; that the possession of a puritan had seemed to me an amusing pleasure, but that it was not love that presided over the feast; in short, I used every means of seduction of which I was capable to obtain from the Duchess of *** the same night that awaited me elsewhere, which I would willingly have sacrificed, such were the charm and attraction of the present moment to me.

The Duchess of *** was also drawn by love; I enjoyed for a moment the ascendancy I had over her; she seemed to hesitate between desire and fear, and her

uncertainty caused her to keep silent for a long time; then she made a further effort, and, arming herself with all the courage of which she stood in need, she said to me:

"You are forgetting then that I am and wish to be only your friend? You have promised Madame Michelin; she seems to value highly a complete reconciliation with you; it would be inhuman to cheat her of her expectation. She is a woman, I repeat, who is worthy of every consideration. When you want to be finished with her, put on little by little an indifferent air that will announce an approaching rupture; do not break off too precipitately. She is too weak a woman to bear the blow you would give her. I foresaw quite well that she, no more than any other woman, would have the talent to hold you; prepare her by degrees for the misfortune that awaits her. The conversation I had with her showed me that she is sincerely attached to you. Your name kept returning to her lips, without her seeking to pronounce it. When I spoke of you, she was eager to hear all the good I said of you. She has a young heart that you have taken by force, and that can no longer leave you. My friend, I feel that it is a torment to you to be loved too much; but whose fault is it? Madame Michelin, if she is abandoned without consideration, is capable of anything; she has not strength enough to stand against misfortune; it may cause her to commit a thousand follies and destroy her. Believe me, live with her as well as it is possible for you to do, and have a care for her too great sensitiveness".

This long argument was tiresome to me. The more the duchess took up the defence of Madame Michelin, the greater was my desire to break the word I had given for the night; she seemed a thousand times preferable to those who were awaiting me, and I repented of having made an engagement which no longer had at that moment the charm that had seduced me.

The refusals of a woman are a new spur to desire; it is painful to a man who thinks himself certain of victory to see it snatched from him; the good he loses seems to him superior to what he has already, and his imagination surrounds the object he cannot have with all the perfections it is possible to desire. The habit of enjoying a woman makes the possession of her insipid; her value is no longer appreciated; she is like a fine picture that is seen every day and hardly ever looked at. People are astonished that a man often prefers a woman inferior in merit to the one whose husband he is; nothing, however, is more natural. I do not speak of the blemishes of character, or of the hidden defects which cannot be kept from the knowledge of a husband, and which art conceals from those whose rights are less extensive. The woman a man has, be she as fresh as Hebe is represented to be, as beautiful as the mother of Cupid, cannot keep up very long the illusion that would beautify her still in his eyes. The first days, she is a goddess; several months pass by, and she is no longer anything more than an ordinary woman. Habit kills desire, and, once this desire is lost, what pleasure remains to a man in the society of the most perfect of women? Living together

takes away all the attraction, and the taste that seems peculiar to those who are not experiencing this tedium, the taste that carries a man away to a less amiable object, according to them, than the one he leaves, is the natural taste of all men; it is born with us. It is the will of beneficent nature that everything around us should vary; she is always new for us, and pleases us only by this variety. The most lovely uniformity becomes monotonous and wearisome, and man was not made to be held down continually to the one object. The conventions of society are against nature; by them a man becomes more unhappy than the animals that are subject to him. He is forced to break his word by being made to put on a bondage from which he cannot free himself in his lifetime; his choice made, religion enjoins on him that he must keep to it until death; I would almost prefer that it should bid us never to be ill. Man has no more the power to be constant all his life than to keep himself free of the sicknesses to which he is liable.

I state it as a fact that a few months more or less make the only difference between the unfaithful and the left; the one would have done what he accuses the other of having carried out; he is first only in date. That is why the man imbued with these principles never allows himself to be caught napping, and should be the first to put himself out of the way of any humiliation. It is at the moment when a woman seems to love you most that she leaves you, and it is only novices in love who are able to believe that they will always please. The unexpected object seduces our

senses, and everything is said, for it is well known that the senses play the only part in love. It happens sometimes that an object that had no further attraction for us recovers in our eyes all the merit of novelty. Absence, refusals, connections with women who have not the same qualities, may reawaken desires that had been extinguished; but there must be no mistake about it, this fire is only passing, it cannot last; often it has been lit only by humiliated self-esteem, when we can no longer assert rights that we have disdained. Man is proud; he likes to triumph; but he deceives himself when he takes for love the desire to subject a woman who dares to resist him.

Such was my position with the Duchess of ***. I could not doubt but that she was wholly in love with me; I could see in fact that she still loved me, and I thought it very strange that she did not yield to my eagerness to renew our connection. I tried once more to seduce her. I could not conceive that she found pleasure in vaunting the merits of her rival to me, of the woman who had led me to neglect her, and I thought that all these fine sentiments were more studied than real. I acted accordingly; I attacked her fiercely; I was really in love with her at that moment; the least absence gave me desires that she alone had the talent to awaken; her resistance increased them. I proposed once more that I should sacrifice my night to her, and, as the duchess was inflexible, I was about to use violence when one of her servants entered. I had not noticed that, during this amorous encounter, the duchess had rung, which had caused the arrival of her lackey. I

had to appear calm; but I was petrified when she said with the greatest coolness:

" Monsieur de Fronsac wants a glass of water. Call Mademoiselle Vincent, and let my horses be harnessed".

I was so dumbfounded by the end of this adventure that I could neither speak nor look at the Duchess of ***. I was furious; a thousand plans for vengeance passed through my mind, and the lackey, obeying his mistress's orders to the letter, had already brought me that impertinent glass of water without my having hit on any settled idea of what I ought to do. This pleasantry was so little of a piece with the duchess's character that I could not get over my surprise at it; a coquette experienced in the conduct of love affairs could not have done more; but an affectionate woman, whom the heart alone had made weak, who had wept so many times over her defeat by an insuperable love which she had been unable to resist, should not, as I saw it, have behaved in such a way: it was contempt. And when I remembered the scene in which I had given her my portrait, which she had sworn to keep all her life, and the scene that had just taken place, the first part of which was proof enough to me, from the long argument she had favoured me with, that I was still very much in her mind, it seemed as though I had been mistaken, and I could not think that she was the same woman.

I was leaning on the mantlepiece, and I was absorbed in reflexions that followed one another rapidly. I gazed mechanically at the duchess, who was still seated on the sofa, where, in spite of her resistance, I had led

her. Her head had fallen on to her bosom, which seemed to be violently moved; her arms were folded in the attitude of one who is reflecting deeply. A throng of passing feelings agitated me at this sight; but I felt that it was hatred that dominated the rest. It made me unjust towards her, and it drove away from my mind all those qualities that I had so many times admired. She seemed to me false, wanton and dishonest, and I felt humiliated at having insisted so much on obtaining favours that were now, as I thought, so little to be desired; which only shows how a mere nothing gives charm to our sensations or destroys it. Doubtless, at that moment, when anger made me so unjust to the Duchess of ***, annoyance suggested to her, for her part, feelings that were not favourable to me. What is certain is that we both remained dumb, and that neither of us attempted to break this silence. The entrance of Mademoiselle Vincent put an end to this melancholy scene, and the duchess rose nonchalantly to tell her to go to her dressing-room. She stammered a few words of excuse at being obliged to leave me, and I left her house still more furious over this desertion. I resolved never to enter it again, and to be quit for ever of a woman who had treated me so badly.

I hardly knew where to turn to purge myself of my bile. I was as much annoyed as it is possible to be. I returned to my own house, to write to this woman, about whom, it seemed to me, I had so much to complain. I began several letters, all of which, being inadequate as an expression of my annoyance, were torn up. I then reflected that contempt should be

paid with contempt, and that a letter would not avenge me as I ought to be avenged. I remembered my assignations for the evening, and I resolved not to spoil the pleasure I was promising myself with the memory of a woman whom I was in honour bound to abandon. I was even unable to conceive then how I had been mad enough to propose to sacrifice to her the enjoyment of two very amiable women, and the still more amusing pleasure of deceiving them both at the same time in the same house. These ideas smoothed away my ill-temper little by little, and I thought that an anger that prevents you from enjoying a good you have desired is pure folly. I gave myself up entirely to the expectation of the pleasure that awaited me, and I found the prospect much more attractive when calm had succeeded the storm that had darkened the picture.

I had told Madame Michelin that I should not arrive until the evening; but, in order to efface entirely all trace of the annoyance that the scene I have just described had occasioned, I thought it necessary to go at once, convinced that the sight of her would dispel every disagreeable idea. I knew the power that the present object had over my senses, and I did not doubt of the success of this interview. I found her with Madame Renaud; both had been at some pains over their toilet, and they were to dine together to celebrate so happy a day. They did not know that each had the same cause to rejoice. The worthy puritan was filled with a gentle happiness, and Madame Renaud announced her desires by the vivacity of her looks.

The surprise caused by my arrival was succeeded by an eagerness to receive me well. They vied with one another in the warmth of their reception; but the fear of betraying themselves kept in check any too pointed expression of this warmth, which at any moment might have broken forth. They told me mysteriously that some good news they had received that day had induced them to join forces in a little feast. A glance that each of them threw me in secret explained the mystery to me, which I was at least as well able to guess as they were. This situation seemed so pleasing to me that I immediately forgot the Duchess of ***; I am even doubtful whether she would have had the preference if she had been able to join these two women; I do not mean because of the dispute that had embittered me towards her; any other day would perhaps have been no more favourable to her. This double assignation seemed to me too amusing for anything else to be preferred to it. I had before me the two women who were its object, and this sight drove away any other idea. The singularity of a connection sometimes makes its whole merit. They urged me to share the frugal repast which they had had prepared in all good friendship; they had both contributed to it, and they begged me to complete their pleasure by accepting their offer, which they would not have dared to make to me, if the occasion had not favoured them by bringing me there at dinner-time. Engagements which I could not break prevented me from accepting their invitation, which gave me great pleasure; but I promised to keep them company as

long as I could, since I was dining much later than they. I insisted that they should sit down to their meal, and I remained with them until I had to leave them. I sat between them; I served them; and I saw that both self-esteem and love were satisfied. A mere trifle from people like us charms women of this class, and I was overwhelmed with thanks and respect. I pressed my knee amorously against that of Madame Michelin, who was somewhat embarrassed over her response to the touch I gave her. It was not so with the lively Renaud: in sitting down to table, she had placed her foot on mine, and it seemed to be nailed there, for despite one or two attempts on my part that I had been compelled to make, she did not take it away. Moreover, she pressed it so strongly, probably in order to give me a more lively opinion of her love, that I thought it well to rid myself—decently, however—of a burden that embarrassed me. I threw a cover on to the floor, and, in spite of the willing servants who immediately flocked round me, I bent down to pick it up. My brunette's foot might have been seen, and she freed me herself of the weight that was a nuisance to me. I then placed my leg in such a position that all her attempts to start the same operation again were useless. Her knee then entered upon another office, and the movement she communicated to mine was sometimes so strong that my whole body was shaken; I had to reply to avoid a further shock. But because we prefer difficult things to those which come to us without being sought, I was more flattered by the slightest touch of the knee that I received from the

puritan than by all those which the brunette bestowed on me so profusely. Time passed rapidly, and it was already late when I left the two women, whose looks announced their approaching happiness.

My imagination was on fire, and for the rest of the day I saw everything in rosy colours. The sensations we experience are always coloured by the state of our mind: if it is gay, everything around us is bright and happy; if it is sad, nature becomes overcast, and we see everything dyed to the tint of the melancholy that is upon us. Therefore, when the Scriptures tell us to weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice, this is no doubt a piece of salutary advice intended for our physical well-being rather than for our moral happiness. Contrariety is mere vexation, and nothing displeases so much as being with people who hold opinions or entertain feelings different from your own. You constrain yourself to put yourself in harmony with them, but it is always at the expense of your character, and, consequently, of your health. I think that, to live long, you must avoid giving shocks to your senses that fatigue them too much. People who allow their feelings often to be roused do not last long: the blade wears out the scabbard. The blood in us becomes discomposed in the end by too much fermentation, and this gives rise to those sick languors that consume so many individuals; the digestion goes wrong, and the juices that should make good the losses we sustain daily go bad, and spread disorder in the whole system instead of a health-giving fluid. Man cannot pay too much attention to moderating his

feelings, especially by the banishment of gloom; sorrow cuts his days down by one half. Happy the man who sees everything without being moved, who early accustoms himself to look upon all that surrounds him as foreign to him. If he lives long, he will see disappear all that is dear to him: what sorrows is he not preparing for himself if he does not accustom himself to these losses? His humanity may lead him to try to remedy the misfortunes of others, but he is wrong to let himself be afflicted by them; he must have prudence enough to regard them as a disagreeable dream, and to seek for a smiling awakening. If he owes some of his time to society, he does not owe his health to it, and it is folly to put himself in the place of his unfortunate friends. What is the result? Sorrow. Life is too short to cut it still shorter. If the reasonable man can share but slightly the misfortunes of others, he must not allow himself to be cast down by his own. Discouragement deprives us of the means of remedying reverses, and, once more, you must combat all funereal sensations, which instil the germs of death into us, with as much care as you avoid the bite of venomous reptiles or poisoned drinks. People who look upon selfishness as a sin do not see that it is in the nature of things.

The night arrived. I repaired to my puritan's home; she was awaiting me in a charming undress; the shop-girl was fast asleep, with the aid of my potion, and there was nothing to form any obstacle to my transports. Madame Michelin was disturbed, and, as usual, was unable to master her trouble; I helped her to get to bed, and never did a valet perform his duties

better. When I was in the place of the worthy Michelin, it came into my head that I was only the understudy of a mere furniture dealer, and this idea, combined with the darkness that prevented me from seeing Madame Michelin, who, moved by the last remnant of her modesty, had promptly put out the light, calmed the vivacity of my transports. I exerted myself, however, to conjure them up again, and, as nature has never been a shrew to me in these thorny moments, she was not long in bringing back the dawn of happiness. My puritan had been suffering for some time over my coolness, and gave herself up without reserve to the reconciliation she yearned for.

But all at once I remembered that I was to go and keep company with Madame Renaud, and this tempered the ardour I had just shown. The puritan, who was astonished at this, and who judged from the first conferences I had had with her, thought that a reconciliation should lead to a much longer explanation. She remained silent; short, stifled sighs betrayed what she dared not say; a few kisses proved to her that I still loved her, without, however, weakening my resolution not to go beyond these tender proofs. However, time was passing, and Madame Michelin saw with much sorrow that the moment of our separation was arriving; she begged me to grant her a few minutes more; but my arrangements had been made, and had to be kept to; at two o'clock I insisted that it was necessary for me to go home. I tore myself pitilessly from the loving arms of the woman, and guided by a candle that had

been lit, I reached the staircase, which I pretended to go down. I allowed Madame Michelin to barricade her door, and softly mounted to her neighbour's, which was above; it was not shut; Madame Renaud was a cautious woman, and was awaiting me in her lobby. She praised my punctuality, and, if I had been a valet on the first floor, I found a lady's maid on the second. The woman served me marvellously well, and I was in the new bed two minutes after having left the other. Madame Renaud was not the kind of woman that is held back by her self-esteem; she flew to meet the homage that was about to be rendered to her, and I was overwhelmed with caresses that it was impossible for me to resist. She had the art of reawakening languishing desires, and I saw that I had been very prudent to have been reserved with Madame Michelin. Finally, healing sleep took possession of her towards morning, and, granting me the same favour, robbed me of even the memory of this charming night. I was awakened by the noise made by the woman's servant, who, having the key of the rooms, had come as usual to light the fire. I pointed out to Madame Renaud my anxieties on the difficulty of getting away; but I found that the woman was brave, and not to be alarmed by trifles; she told me that the girl had to go to the market, and that, during this time, I should be able to retire when I wished. Her calmness reassured me, and at Madame Renaud's side I patiently awaited the favourable moment. It arrived; the servant left, and the mistress pointed out to me how convenient it was to be connected with her. I saw quite well that

she was expecting a promise to come and share her hermitage—as she called her apartment—with her again; I did not fail to assure her that I liked it too much not to return to it.

I had risen, without having yet dressed myself, when the door opened on Madame Michelin in the same undress she had worn the evening before. The accursed servant, who had met her on the staircase, and of whom she had asked when she could see Madame Renaud, had opened the door for her, as for the friend of her mistress, without foreseeing the tragi-comic scene she was about to create. The arrival of Madame Michelin created a charming theatrical sensation; I stood there with my eyes fixed on her and my mouth wide open, doubting the reality of this apparition. Madame Michelin, more surprised still, had fallen, pale and trembling, on to a chair that was near her, and the Renaud woman, who was sitting up, had drawn the sheet over her head to hide her shame, overwhelmed by this unexpected happening, in spite of her natural intrepidity. We remained in this attitude for several minutes; but this interesting silence was broken by the exclamations of Madame Michelin, who, in a tone of despair, cried:

"Oh, Your Grace! . . . Oh, Your Grace!"

Courage returned to me; I went up to her, but I was repulsed, and she advised me to finish dressing. The exclamations began again, and Madame Renaud was their object. The neighbour, whose shame was beginning to pass away, said, first of all, a few disconnected words, and finally collected her wits. She

confessed that she was guilty; and that the love she had for me was her sole excuse.

" A virtuous woman cannot always be sure of herself. There is a certain moment when virtue is of no avail", she added, " and that moment His Grace called forth. I am extremely sorry, my dear, that you should have been a witness of my weakness; I know that I shall lose your friendship, that the austerity of your principles will no longer permit you to have any intimacy with me, that you are too religious to admit to your society a woman who has behaved as I have done, and who has gone wrong with pleasure; for I cannot hide from you that I adore His Grace, and that I shall always love him. I do not even blush to give him before you these proofs of my affection. But, my dear, if it were possible for you to be indulgent, you would pity your friend, who has failed in those duties that you so carefully fulfil, and you would not love her any the less, although she has followed the impulse of her heart".

The puritan lowered her eyes at receiving so much praise, which she well knew she did not deserve.

I thought it incumbent upon me to speak in my turn, and I assured Madame Renaud that her neighbour's religion was too pure not to permit her to forgive in others these little irregularities of sentiment.

" I am convinced", I continued, " that Madame Michelin has a large fund of indulgence for the sin that chance has led her to discover in us, and that we have committed under the sway of our senses. She knows better than anybody that precept of the

VISITE NOCTURNE, FAITE AU DUC DE RICHELIEU, DÉTENU À LA BASTILLE

Pour la Troisième fois dans un cachot, par deux princesses du sang déguisées

(From an engraving by Le Roy, after the drawing by Le Cler)

[*face p. 112*

Scriptures that commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and I am certain that she observes it scrupulously. She knows that to him who asks must be given, and she gives to the unfortunate who apply to her. Is it not true", I said to Madame Michelin, taking her by the hand, " that my lovely puritan is filled with divine love, and that that love sometimes stoops to the things of the earth ?"

My speech doubled her embarrassment; she wrung my hand to prevent me from going on; but, as my plan was to take advantage of the opportunity that offered, so that our joint intrigue should no longer be hidden, and so that I should be able to act freely with the two women, I kissed her passionately, and asked forgiveness for my slight treachery towards her. I told her that I had not been able to see the rare friendship that existed between her and her neighbour without desiring to have my share in it; that a friendship between the two sexes was not well founded except in so far as they were unreserved with one another, and that this was the reason that had led me to try every means to have an intimate connection with Madame Renaud.

The latter, who, until this moment, had maintained a beseeching attitude towards her neighbour, seemed as astonished by the free and easy manner in which I addressed Madame Michelin as by the unequivocal nature of what I said. The two women looked at each other without saying a word, and then lowered their eyes. As for me, I could not prevent myself from shouting with laughter, and I added that I was astonished that a trifle could put them out so much;

that nothing was more usual than to see a man sharing the friendship of two women, and that this should make it all the more keen; that I relied on there being nothing further hidden between us, and that this trio of intimacy would acquire each day new charms. It was now the turn of the Renaud woman to break out into exclamations:

"What! My dear! . . . What, you were my . . ."

The word "rival" died on her lips . . . she pronounced it the moment afterwards.

"There are no rivals here", I cried, "there are two tender friends who have the same tastes, the same inclinations, and who should love one another all the more because they have so much in common in their way of thinking".

I took hold of Madame Michelin, whose look would have killed me, if that had been possible, and, despite her resistance, I dragged her towards Madame Renaud's bed; there, I joined their hands, to which I added mine, and I pronounced an oath that was to perpetuate this federative pact. I forced them to kiss one another, and I placed on their mouths a kiss that was not returned. The Renaud woman soon made up her mind, and said that she was sorry to learn that she shared my love with another, but that she preferred it to be Madame Michelin. She could not get over her surprise at this adventure, nor conceive how the piety of her friend could have become so human; she was relieved to have for a companion in weakness a woman who, she knew, was really religious; she assured Madame Michelin that she would not cease to be

attached to her, and begged her always to be her friend. The latter was furious at being placed on the same level as the other, and at having lost the superiority which her first discovery had given her; she was religious, and consequently had more spleen; she was suffering in her self-esteem, and friend and lover both seemed odious to her. However, it was necessary to bow to circumstances; she had nothing left to say: her neighbour's weakness was her own; she had been in the same situation; only she had been better served by chance; and she really had to excuse in another the fault she had to forgive in herself. It was decided to put ourselves quickly into a state fit to appear before the girl who was about to return, and Madame Renaud and I dressed. The puritan wanted to leave us; but I prevented her.

"Ah!" she said to me under her breath, "how you have hurt me! . . . To leave so early this morning, and for what a reason!"

I saw that her self-esteem was mightily wounded. I continued to prevent her from leaving us, and I proposed that we should breakfast together. The Renaud woman, always good-natured, supported my proposal, and offered chocolate; Madame Michelin was bent on going downstairs, but I opposed her resolution, saying that the evening before they had dined together to celebrate the night they were going to share without knowing it, and that they could very well breakfast with me to crown this delicious event. They looked at one another again, and cried that I was a great monster.

"But he is charming", Madame Renaud added, and I called upon the puritan to agree that she had sometimes been of the same opinion.

Breakfast was decided upon, and the chocolate prepared. I asked for news of the shop-girl, while Madame Renaud was occupied, and Madame Michelin replied tartly that it was very cruel to treat the girl thus in order to behave still worse towards her mistress. She informed me that they had had all the trouble in the world to awaken her, and that they had feared at first that she was dead; that, since then, her limbs had been numbed; and she reproached herself for having yielded to my persuasion. She still showed regret at having been left so soon for an infidelity, and I vainly assured her that it was only a joke, that I loved her a thousand times better than Madame Renaud; she was none the calmer for this. I told her that, as for her shop-girl, she need have no anxiety, that the numbness would soon disappear, and that it was the effect usually produced by opium on those who were not accustomed to it.

Breakfast passed gaily enough so far as I was concerned; the puritan did not eat, Madame Renaud but poorly, and, as for me, I devoured. From time to time I took their hands; I called them my dear wives, and I assured them that plurality of wives had been permitted from time immemorial. My detention in the Bastille had led me to study, and I displayed my erudition; but I saw quite well that I had not the talent to convince them, and that, if they were indulgent for the past, it caused them a deal of trouble to be so for the

present. We all think our own thoughts, and, at bottom, I found their little resentment just enough; but I had determined to accustom them to sharing, and I wanted them to live amicably together. I knew that the first moments would be stormy, but, with patience and gaiety, I was almost certain of restoring calm. The one who, in my opinion, would cause me the greater trouble was Madame Michelin; her piety, that was against me from the beginning of our connection, increased at this moment her regrets and her repentance. As she had resisted the more, she thought that I owed her more; and she felt humiliated at finding a rival in her friend; what annoyed her most was to have her rival before her; but the dear puritan loved, and consequently was weak: this assured me that sooner or later she would forgive me and come back to me. Her neighbour, Madame Renaud, whose self-esteem was also wounded, might have been on her dignity with a lover of her own class; but a man like me flattered her vanity, and she preferred to enjoy him, although sharing him with another, rather than not have him at all. The faithless lover seemed desirable to her, and I saw that she was resigned to the sacrifice it was necessary to make. Her good temper even returned in the middle of the breakfast.

"At least, we have nothing to reproach ourselves with", she said to her friend; and she kissed her with a show of sincerity.

I took my leave of them. Madame Renaud returned the kiss that I gave her, but her friend was inflexible for a few minutes. I asked Madame Renaud to come

and encourage her friend to make peace, and the worthy woman, to please me, begged Madame Michelin to kiss me. It seemed amusing to me that this third party should be the means of our reconciliation. Finally, her efforts had the success she wanted, and I felt a movement of the lips that the puritan assured me was a kiss. I accepted the assurance she gave me as true. I left them, promising to return soon to see them, and I told them that I would have no more ill-humour, that I passed over what had just taken place as being the result of the first impulse, but that everything must be forgotten by the time I came back, and the sooner the better.

The Duchess of ***, who had been absent from my mind during this double scene, returned to it the same evening. I felt the same desire to be revenged for what she had done to me, and I resolved to give her an account of my happiness, an account which I should be careful to exaggerate to punish her for her conduct. I thought that she would be annoyed to learn that, in spite of the love I showed her, it influenced my pleasures so little, and that I could easily do without her favours.

I went to see her. They were at play. She received me coldly, but little by little she displayed more interest in me. The more I saw that my return gave her pleasure, the more pleasure I promised myself from what I was about to do. I had already many times observed that what upset a woman most was wounded self-esteem, and it was, in fact, the duchess's self-esteem that I intended to humiliate. The game

finished, and I became intent on staying alone with her without betraying my purpose. Only two women remained to supper, which was very short; I did not forget to pay my respects to them; I took very little notice of the Duchess of ***, and I gave them my arm to conduct them to their carriage. I pretended that I had forgotten my snuff box, and I went upstairs again to the duchess, whom I found alone, as I desired. She thought that there was a certain amount of eagerness in my return, and that I wanted to have an explanation with her over what had passed between us the evening before; but, putting on the gayest of moods, I told her that she saw in me the happiest man alive, that I should be betraying the friendship she had for me and the part she had so kindly assumed of being my dear confidant, if I hid from her that the most delicious of adventures had just happened to me, an adventure that was far finer than any other I had had.

" How grateful I am to you", I cried, " for having been cruel to me! If, in your kindness, you had kept me with you, as I proposed, I should have lost the most agreeable moment in my life".

This opening puzzled the Duchess of ***, who, however, did her very best to hide her agitation. I told her what had happened to me with my puritan, and I insisted much more on the merits of Madame Renaud, whom she did not know. I informed her of how I had passed the night, and how I had triumphed over this new mistress, whom I vaunted above all the others. Nothing could be more lovely, more seductive. I went into details, the memory of which seemed to

enchant me still, and never did a man with senses as tranquil as mine were then appear more amorous. The duchess listened to me impatiently, without daring, however, to show how disturbed she was; she laughed with me, but her laughter was forced. I knew her well enough to be aware that she was suffering inwardly, although her face was unperturbed, and I applauded myself for the pain I was giving her. I went on with my account, exaggerating it all the time, and, after having enjoyed for upwards of an hour the painful state of constraint in which the duchess was, I rose saying that, after having fulfilled the duty imposed upon me by friendship, it was only right that I should fly where love awaited me. I left her without kissing or caressing her in any way, and I perceived, to my great contentment, that she was as dumbfounded as she was upset by my story and my departure.

This woman, as I have already said, really loved me, and struggled incessantly against her inclination. Her love was disguised in the form of friendship, but this latter sentiment was easily eclipsed by the other. She hoped, as I found out afterwards, that her sweet reasonableness would one day attach me to her more; that, after having gone round a circle of women, her gentleness and her friendship would weigh down the balance in her favour; that the defects I should notice in other women would form a contrast that would speak for her, and, according to my conduct, she would either remain my friend or become my mistress again. She had not, as yet, acquired enough command over herself to tolerate sharing me, which humiliated her, but which

I managed to accustom her to, like the others; for no woman on earth would have had the power to hold me; I was born to flutter, and it was necessary either to take me, as I was, unfaithful, or to leave me on the day my acquaintance was first made.

I returned home greatly satisfied with my little vengeance, and I found two letters, one from the puritan and the other from the Renaud woman. The first seemed very long, the second very badly written, and, as I was tired, I put off reading them until the morrow. I had need of rest, and I rose late. On awakening, I glanced at the epistle from Madame Michelin, who overwhelmed me with reproaches, and accused me of being an obstacle to her salvation; but as, in all probability, the moment for her entire conversion had not yet arrived, she confessed that she was disposed to forgive me if I would break with Madame Renaud. The latter was more moderate in her abuse, and avowed that she loved me still in spite of my unpardonable behaviour; however, she begged me to try whether it was not possible to love her alone, saying that sharing me seemed a cruel thing to suffer. This request made me laugh, and I resolved to give them both an assignation for the following day, in the apartment that I had furnished. Madame Renaud did not know it, and it was only just that she should have the same privilege as her rival, for whom I had had it arranged. I fixed the appointment for five o'clock exactly, not wishing to have a private explanation with one any more than with the other. I had no other desire than to divert myself with these two women,

by creating an amusing scene between them; for I had no love left, my desires were satisfied, and the attraction of novelty was necessary to arouse them again. I was beginning to find it tedious to go sighing in a shop for a little shop-wife, who, although very pretty, offered me nothing new, since I had had her. Her neighbour had thrown herself at my head; I knew her too by heart, and only lack of something else to do could ever make me go back to these two women, unless their jealousy or their mutual agreement might procure me some slight diversion that could reawaken desires in me that were practically extinguished.

I had my notes taken round by a trusty man, who delivered them in such a way that neither had the slightest suspicion that I had also written to the other. I was in my little apartment before five o'clock, and the puritan was the first to arrive. Her only words were in the form of reproaches; I let the torrent flow, convinced that the other visit I was expecting would stop it in a few moments. In fact, she seemed astonished to hear the bell ring, and more astonished still to see Madame Renaud, who was no less surprised to see Madame Michelin.

" You see", I said to them, " the eagerness I have to reunite two good friends. I have nothing hidden from them; I have promised to share in equal portions the affection they inspire in me, and you see that I am keeping my word. I am only annoyed that they should seek to break up such a charming commerce, and each wish to be loved to the exclusion of the other. What! you, Madame Michelin, will return my love only if

I break with Madame Renaud! And you, Madame Renaud, your affection will be the price of my rupture with your friend! How cruel you are! Did you not know then what an embarrassment the choice would be? Here! Look at yourselves", I added, placing them before a mirror; " is it possible for me to judge between you? On the one hand, I see an adorable blond, whose features are enchanting in their perfection; gentleness, that quality so rare and desirable in a woman, is depicted on a face that has a thousand charming details to be admired; if I saw only her, I should adore her and her alone. But I turn round, and I discover a brunette whose vivacity is ravishing; her complexion, though not so fair as the other's, is none the less attractive for that; her eyes promise pleasure, and give it with the promise. I say nothing of the still more ravishing secret beauties, with which both are provided; and you want me to decide between you? No, ladies, no that is impossible. I will not have myself compared to Buridan's ass, who, placed between two equal measures of bran, died because he did not know which to choose. He should have solved his problem, of course, by eating both. What he did not do, I shall have wisdom enough to carry out. By looking at you both, I might remain so long suspended in a state of uncertainty, that finally I should become incapable of making a choice, and I should be deprived of two lovely women who are dear to me. As I cannot pass judgment, I will do equal homage to both; I will love them without deciding which is the more worthy of it; when I have admired one long

enough, I will turn to the contemplation of the other, and, by never judging between their equal perfections, I shall have the happiness of admiring them alternately".

Madame Michelin, who was not to be convinced by my speech, left me, and went and sat in a corner of the room, annoyed no doubt still more by the praise I gave to her rival; Madame Renaud rushed off, and threw herself on to a small sofa opposite to the spot chosen by the puritan; and I remained alone, standing between my two divinities, who seemed to be reflecting deeply over what had just happened.

I told them that they were crazy to begin again the scene that had taken place in Madame Renaud's room, and that it was much better to take advantage of the present moment; that time spent in jeremiads was lost for pleasure; that it was not as though they had just learned something new, and that I was well enough provided with love to love them both at the same time. I set about kissing them one after the other, and assured them that I should know their attachment for me by the desire they showed to be united again. I took the puritan, who let herself be dragged up to her friend, and there I fell upon my knee and begged them to make it up. I painted a picture of the charm it would offer all of us to come and spend a few hours in my little retreat, and, in the end, I persuaded Madame Renaud.

" My dear", she said to Madame Michelin, kissing her, " you love His Grace too much to give him up to me; I adore him, and I cannot abandon him to you;

we must therefore agree to share him, as he proposes. Let us live on good terms with him, so long as he does not show any marked preference".

"Come now!" I cried, clasping Madame Michelin's hands in mine; "do as your friend has done, and peace and happiness will be ours for ever".

The puritan was more crafty than the other; she became eloquent over the great merit of the sacrifice she was making, which would always weigh upon her mind.

"Ah!" she said, "how quickly does the first step in sin drag us into the abyss! I dare not reflect on my present condition. Who could have told me that I should have been weak, and weak to the point you have reduced me to? . . . Ah! Your Grace!"

A kiss came at the end of the exclamation. I bent their heads together, so that they could kiss again, which they did willingly enough.

Pleased with my first success, I determined to profit by this happy reconciliation. I called them my dear wives, my faithful companions, the two beings chosen to make me happy. I sought to turn their heads, and to rouse in them desires the strength of which I knew, and which would drive away any reflexions contrary to my plans. The skilful man who knows how to communicate gradually the heat of love to the senses of the most virtuous woman is quite certain of soon being absolute master of her mind and her person; you cannot reflect when you have lost your head; and, moreover, principles of wisdom, however deeply engraved they may be on the mind, are effaced in that

moment when the heart yearns only for pleasure: pleasure alone then commands and is alone obeyed. The man who has had experience of conquests nearly always succeeds where he who is only timid and in love fails; he attacks and wins in less time than the other takes to declare his passion.

When I had brought my two belles to the state of abandonment in which I wanted them, I expressed a more eager desire; their eyes lit up; my caresses were returned; and it was plain that their resistance would not delay for more than a few moments the next scene I desired to make them play. I proposed that each should accompany me in turn into a charming closet, next to the room in which we were, which I wanted them to admire. They both remained silent.

" You hesitate ?" I said to them. " I will see which of you is the more attached to me. The one who loves me the more will be the first to follow the lover she wishes to convince of her affection. It is the greatest proof of love she can give me; she will be the one who may please me the more, and I shall remember it as long as I live".

Speaking thus, I went towards the closet. Neither got up; Madame Renaud smiled; the puritan lowered her eyes. Nothing decisive happened; but I foresaw that this scene, which was perhaps a new form of pleasure, would end as I wished.

" You can see", I said, coming back to them, " that your love is less than mine, or rather that you are each afraid to show the other the eagerness you have to satisfy my desires: you are held back a little by shame.

As for me, it is impossible for me to decide which shall be first; both of you, according to our agreement, which I wish to observe always, are equally dear to me. Well! let it be settled by lot. Here is a book; the one who comes nearest to the letter *a* will be forced to follow me, and the other will patiently await her return before she goes in to see the closet".

I then presented the book and the pin to them, for fate to decide; their hands remained as motionless as their tongues were dumb; I had recourse to further caresses; I begged; and soon the worthy Renaud, apostrophising Madame Michelin, said to her:

" Neighbour, the wine is drawn; we must drink it; a little shame will soon pass. Imitate me, I am going to try my luck".

With these words, she pricked with the pin, and got the letter *f*. I complimented her on so significant a letter. I then presented the arbiter of fate to the puritan; I had almost to guide her hand, and, after she had trembled a great deal, the pin fixed on a page that gave the letter *e*; it was for her therefore to go first. The two women both blushed at this, one from modesty and the other from annoyance. I kissed the dear Renaud to console her for the delay, and I took the puritan under my arm; she still resisted, though weakly; her knees refused to support her, and it took me some time to get her from the drawing room to the closet, where I let her fall on to a sofa. I did not want to lose any time, knowing that I had other work to do, and I began by attempting to complete our reconciliation; this roused Madame Michelin.

"What! Your Grace", she said, "it was not a joke then? I thought it was only a game".

"A game!" I answered, "when I love you!"

And, without any more ado, I acted in such a way that she soon perceived that the game was a reality. I knew my puritan, and I was well aware that, after a few struggles, she gave herself up completely to the present moment. This one appeared to be as agreeable to her as the others we had previously spent together; she forgot that she was sharing me and her friend who was awaiting the end of our conversation. However, I was in honour bound to treat the other just as well, and I judged that it was time to let Madame Renaud have a sight of the same beauties that were in the closet. The puritan was so comfortable there that she expressed regrets at leaving it, and her eyes told me that, when a woman had gone so far as to have made herself guilty, an extra sin would not frighten her. I might have believed her if Madame Renaud had not been in the drawing-room, to which we returned, not without the puritan's saying to me: *It was very short!*

I found Madame Renaud reading the book that had given priority to her rival; I sat Madame Michelin beside her, and took the other by the hand.

"I am not going to resist", she said. "When you have so good an example to follow", pointing to Madame Michelin, "you must not hesitate". And she ran to the closet, where she added, laughing: "Really, my dear duke, I have come here only to laugh at you; for what can you say to me now? You had to make such a

long speech to persuade a puritan that I think the best thing you can do with me is to remain silent".

This gibe put me on my mettle, and I let her see at once that I had always a few ideas in reserve for my friends, and that I was never at a loss for a reply. This sudden justification astonished and delighted Madame Renaud, who responded with a transport that proved her contentment, and she left the sitting only after having repeated continually:

" What a man! What a man! He is astonishing! How often you could be happy with him if he were only faithful!"

She returned gaily to the drawing-room, and cracked a thousand jokes with Madame Michelin, who had taken up the book she had left.

" I am certain you think", she said to her, " that you exhausted His Grace's conversation; but you must know that witty people like him have never completely said all, and that the end of their talk is quite as good as the beginning".

The conversation became free. We took wine. Madame Michelin's face cleared completely, and I was pleased to see that the two women were becoming united once more. We separated, not without having promised each other to return and renew the party, and especially to begin it on the next occasion with the gaiety that had terminated it this time.

It was at this period that I lost my father[1]; he was of an advanced age, and my grief over his death was so slight that the pleasure I felt at being richer effaced

[1] 10th May, 1715.

it without any difficulty. My father left his affairs in a complicated state; my inheritance was loaded with debts, and I found myself plunged in a labyrinth of lawsuits, in which the lawyers led me astray with all the greater pleasure in that they made a fine profit out of it. I succeeded to a very advantageous inheritance, and I admired the prudence of the Cardinal, my great-uncle, which transmitted into my hands the Duchies of Richelieu and of Fronsac, the Ferté-Bernand and other estates, and the salt mines of Hierre-en-Trouage; and here was I, a young man, in the enjoyment of a rich entail. Without this wise foresight of the Cardinal, I should have been lost. My father, whose fortune had been under trustees, would have been obliged to sell his estates, and he would have spent the money as fast as he received it: no matter how large the sum was, it trickled through his hands immediately. He had ruined himself with no honour to himself. If I have inherited from him a taste for women, at least I ennobled it a little; he nearly always gave himself up to it crapulously, and spent a lot of money in intrigues of which a Peer of France should have been ashamed. There are people who have a talent for dissipating their fortune without its being possible to assign any particular reason for it. They have all the vices, but none of them remarkable enough to be cited as the cause of their ruin. My father was one of these; he had had from his father, who had also made breaches in it, the immense wealth left by Cardinal de Richelieu, and bit by bit he had sold nearly all the estates of this inheritance. He had not been forced by his offices to live

on any great scale; he had had no command in the army. Lack of method, confidence in his lawyers, who enriched themselves at his expense, his own spendthrift tastes, which were a daily drain on him, all contributed to the disorder of his affairs, which had long been a cause of suffering to him, and which, at his death, interrupted the course of my successes in love. I gave up my time to the unravelling of affairs that wearied me to extinction; I was, I confess, rewarded for this sacrifice when I saw some purpose in it that would increase my inheritance; I had all the asperity of an heir, and the keenest desire to shine, which has always been to my taste. I devoted myself to pettifoggery, spurred on by the need I was in to see clearly where others were endeavouring to keep me in darkness. It was while examining the dilapidation of my father's affairs and on discovering how much the estates that had been sold diminished the extent of what should have belonged to me, that I could not bless enough the use of entails. This is doubtless the best thing that could have been done for the support of great houses; without entails, not half of them perhaps would subsist; if an estate is lost or split up the heir to a great name is rendered incapable of supporting his rank, and it must be acknowledged that a great fortune is an indispensable necessity for the man of birth or the man who enjoys an important charge. The eldest son of a family who receives a considerable inheritance perpetuates its glory and renown; he is able to undertake great things; he can make commerce flourish, encourage the arts, and hold in the world the position he should have. His

name commands respect, and his fortune astonishes, dazzles, and maintains a troop of unfortunates who are only too anxious to humiliate themselves before him. The younger sons are not to be pitied, moreover, for they find in the Order of Malta or in the Church a recompense that often enables them to make a greater figure in the world than their elder brother. The bounties of the King, which can always be obtained when you know how to pay your court cleverly to the people in office, and especially to the mistresses, are another great resource, and it is only fools who cannot profit by the events that happened so frequently at Court. When you are embarrassed with daughters, you makes abbesses of them, and I do not think them unfortunate, instead of vegetating in the world, to have complete power over a community that is eager to obey you; and every woman finds pleasure in commanding. It will be said that this may not be their vocation; to which I reply that an abbess has liberty enough to temper the rigidity of the vows she has taken, and to find means to appease desires that may rise up against them. I am not to be convinced that they are to be pitied; I have known some charming abbesses, who were quite as well aware as I was that *there are more ways than one of compounding with your conscience.* Those who will not take advantage of them have only themselves to blame.

It has been shown how essential it is to perpetuate in a monarchical state the fortunes of the great houses; it has been seen that they are the support of the Throne, and that they contribute to its glory. A king sur-

rounded by an opulent nobility shines much more by their multiplied splendour, which is added to the state he should keep. The great lord is one of the links of the chain that touches the Throne, and descends imperceptibly towards the people; he obeys the master, and from him takes the power to make his inferiors obey in turn. He should impress the people, and a great fortune is one of the best means of doing so. The practice of entail is spreading among the families, and, so long as France exists, it is certain that this means of assuring their possessions should be regarded as a fundamental part of the constitution. It would be the silliest of political mistakes to abolish them, and I am convinced that no king will suffer it. The head of a family should even be forced to renew an entail that is about to come to an end.

I spent some time in this chaos of occupations that were unfamiliar to me; but finally the taste for pleasures, which my interests had interrupted, became livelier than ever. My ideas of vengeance against the Duchess of *** had died away, and I returned to her, led by a friendship that had never been extinguished. This woman was like an angel; my misdeeds vanished immediately from her mind, and with her it was always indulgence receiving folly. I was welcomed with open arms; she told me how great her interest was in my new estate, advised me not to imitate my father by wasting my fortune, and we left each other better friends than ever.

I went to see Madame Michelin, whom I found much changed, and who was extremely pleased to see

me. She told me that she had been ill, and she gave as the reason for her illness the too lively sensations of pain and pleasure I had caused her. I asked her permission to go and see Madame Renaud, and I noticed as I left her a striking alteration in all her features.

Madame Renaud flung herself at me as I entered, and, without reproaching me for my silence in regard to three or four letters she had written to me during my absence, gave herself up unreservedly to the joy she felt over my return. I must say that the good lady's style and handwriting were so pitiable that I had not taken the trouble to read her letters; I knew their contents without the necessity of perusing them. You may be sure that a woman of her liveliness was not content with simple protestations of friendship, and that I had to employ more positive means of assuring her of it. When these first transports had passed away, I asked her whether she had lived on good terms with her neighbour; she informed me that all had gone well, but that for some time past she had noticed a great change in Madame Michelin's character and face; she was of opinion that it must be because Madame Michelin was being gnawed at by some worm, and she guessed it to be my sharing my love between the two women. She assured me that this had also given her a great deal of pain, but that she had made her choice, and her neighbour should do the same; for, since it was impossible to have me otherwise, there was nothing else to do but to bow to my will. This account rendered Madame Michelin more attractive to me,

and I went downstairs to make an appointment with her. I found her in a brown study. I urged her to come that evening to the apartment; she sighed, and promised to do so.

The interview was fixed for seven o'clock; I was exact, but it was nearly eight o'clock before Madame Michelin arrived. I told her that I would take my vengeance for her being late by kissing her twice as much. She assured me that she had not been able to come earlier, because her husband had not gone out, and that she had had to make a pretext of an evening service that was being held that day in her parish, in order to keep her word. Tears began to flow at this, but I thought I should soon find a means of drying them up. The woman, contrary to her custom, made no difficulty over yielding to my approaches, and she was entirely mine without a struggle. I even saw her endeavouring to seize the fleeting pleasure, which she could not do in spite of her efforts. Only these words escaped her: "*Ah! It is all over! I am unhappy!*" I sought to ascertain the cause of this exclamation; but it was in vain, and, her time being up, I was forced to let her go without discovering what was the matter. I thought it was a moment's reflexion that had disturbed her usual pleasure, and I dismissed it from my mind.

The whirl of the world, which had been carrying me more and more along with it since I had been the Duke of Richelieu, made me neglect these two connections, which were beginning to be a burden to me. Madame Renaud especially pursued me with her

letters, which did not have the merit of bringing me any nearer to her; nevertheless, I was able occasionally to satisfy her; but I always left her with the intention of abandoning her. Madame Michelin, more attractive, aroused desires that still spoke sometimes in her favour. For some long time she had not been able to find an opportunity of going to the apartment, or at least she had pretended that this was so; but I insisted so much that she appointed a day to see me there. I arrived to time, and the lady kept this assignation more punctually than she did the last. I wanted to begin with an amorous explanation; but she stopped me, and implored me to sit down and listen to her for an instant.

"Your Grace", she said, "I loved you from the moment I saw you. I was happy with an indulgent husband, who recompensed me for the love I did not bear him with a thousand attentions that a virtuous woman cannot receive without gratitude. A very tender friendship took the place of love. The practice of my religion, which I followed with great fervour, stood me in the stead of the love my heart needed. You know better than I what kind of chance it was that was the cause of my making your acquaintance. I went every day to church, as usual, to worship God, and I did not perceive that I was led there by the desire to meet you. It was in this same apartment that, seduced by you, I failed for the first time in my sacred duties. I do not hide from you that the pleasure of it, the first I had ever felt so keenly, dominated me to such an extent that I was incapable of realising what I was

doing. When the thought of that first lapse of mine came into my mind, the thought of you, which was much more powerful, chased repentance away. On the day when it was my misfortune to discover that you were unfaithful to me, my reason returned and held up to me a mirror in which I saw all my faults. I thought that by greater recklessness I should drive away the remorse that dogged me, and to my sorrow I discovered that I was more sinful without being more happy. You will remember that I placed no obstacle in the way of your desires the last time we were here together. I flattered myself that the pleasure I always experienced with you would snatch me away from myself: a vain hope. Pleasure flies me, and I feel certain it cannot come back. My health is giving way; the torment I am suffering is destroying me, and I do not wish you to stand any longer between God and a heart that can now only pray for His mercy. I am yours for the last time, if the enjoyment of a wailing woman can still tempt you, and to-morrow I shall throw myself at the foot of the altar, to mourn the errors of my ways, and to ask the forgiveness of Heaven for my sins".

This jeremiad dumbfounded me for some time; but, on recovering and convinced that jealousy was the cause of this pious return to Divinity, I first of all assured her that I would break with Madame Renaud, who wearied me, and that I would devote all my time to her. She had a languishing and religious air that aroused my desires, and I met with no resistance in satisfying them; but my puritan was no longer the same: her senses

spoke no more for her, my caresses tired her, and tears were the only reply to my pleasures. They were not of long duration; this interview was not in the least amusing for me, and I left Madame Michelin free to retire. She took me by the hand, which she kissed, wished me long happiness, and told me, sighing, that she had not long to live.

I went out quite sad, and rushed to the Duchess of ***'s, where I found the charming Princess of ***. An elegant figure, a row of pearls in the mouth, a celestial voice soon brought me out of my abstraction; melancholy disappeared, and a new pleasure instilled balm into all my senses.

I hastened to pay my respects to her. They were gambling; I appointed myself her adviser; a few words of current gallantry were mingled with the advice I gave her; she seemed to hear me kindly. She often smiled; my repartees amused her, and I drew a happy augury for the future. The game finished too soon for my liking. The Princess of ***, who was to sup with the Duchess du Maine[1], could not accept the invitation of the Duchess of ***, who urged her to remain and keep her company. I saw her go out with regret, and, after her departure, I found that my heart was affected as when you have just lost someone who is dear to you.

I did not want the Duchess of *** to perceive the emotion which the retirement of the Princess of ***

[1] Louise Anne de Bourbon (1676-1753), daughter of Prince de Condé, married in 1692 to the Duc du Maine, son of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

had evoked in me; I resumed my gaiety, and I confess that I was obliged to make an effort to force it to the fore. I wanted to be alone with the Duchess of ***, but Madame de Luynes[1] and M. de Gontaut[2], who had no engagement, remained to supper with her; and I had to suffer in patience. However, I had the pleasure of hearing the woman I loved spoken of; Gontaut, who was in love with her, praised her unceasingly. I was very careful not to say anything, so as not to show that she had also made an impression on me.

Madame de Luynes told us that she pitied the Princess of *** because she had a husband who did not return her affection; that everybody was convinced that he lived on perfectly good terms with her; that, in fact, he had all the outward appearance of a man who loves, but that he was in love with and subjugated by a Madame d'Ornano, a high-handed and haughty woman; that it was to please this mistress that he fulfilled none of the duties a husband owes to his wife, which could not be said to satisfy the Princess of ***, who worshipped her husband.

Gontaut, who was as impatient as I was to hear further details, begged Madame de Luynes to go on with her story, because it interested him; he forestalled me with this request; the Duchess of *** and I joined with de Gontaut in urging on Madame de Luynes, who asked for nothing better than to monopolise the conversation, who loved the Princess

[1] Her husband, the Duc de Luynes, left important memoirs.

[2] Madame de Gontaut was a well-known beauty.

of *** very much, and who satisfied our curiosity immediately.

" It gives me great pleasure", she said, " to be asked to praise my dear Hortense, for that is what she was called before marrying the Prince of ***. I have never known a more amiable and attractive woman. Her misfortune is to have a heart prone to love, to have formed her ideas of love perhaps too much on novels, which she used to devour, and to have been united to a man who is cold, and who repulses her affection for him. Unfortunately, I helped to make her marriage, and I have never ceased blaming myself for it.

" My Hortense lost her mother before she was fifteen years of age; her father, who loved her very much, would not allow her to leave his side; he wanted to watch over her education, which was excellent. She made great progress with all the masters she had, and soon everybody was talking of her accomplishments and her beauty. Several suitors presented themselves. Marshal de Villeroy's wife wanted to have her married to a relation of her husband's; the wife of Marshal de Villars proposed the little Count de Clermont[1]; in short, the father had so many offers that he did not know whom to choose. About this time she confided in me, and begged me to tell her father that she wished to follow her heart in the choice of a husband. Her father, who lived only for her, swore that he would not force her will, and that he would wait until her heart had spoken.

[1] The Comte de Clermont was a prince of the Royal Family. He superseded Richelieu as commander of the French Army in 1758.

"The Prince of *** saw her at a ball I gave. You know that he is tall and well-built, and that he looks very mild. Hortense danced several times with him, and found the man who was destined to inspire her with love. Some few casual attentions were taken by her as a formal declaration; and it did not require anything more to turn her young head. This lover seemed to her the first of men; she recalled all she had read, and the comparison was in favour of the prince. His cold manner was taken for timidity, his naturally languorous look for sensibility; in short, the imagination of my little Hortense lent to this new lover charms and qualities he did not possess. He was a musician, she loved music. It was arranged that, if the father consented, he should come and take part in concerts with her from time to time. The Prince of *** is the kind of man who is everywhere well received. The consent of Hortense's father was not difficult to obtain; the prince took advantage of it, and was in constant attendance to play Hortense's accompaniments. Chance served them always so well that, when she came to visit me, I was certain to see the prince arrive. Several months passed, and the prince's assiduity led Hortense's father to believe that he had cast his eyes on his daughter. However, he said nothing, and the girl was very impatient for him to break his silence. She opened her heart to me; I saw that it was given entirely to the prince. The friendship I have for Hortense led me to risk speaking to him; I praised my little friend; he fell in with me completely; and yet he gave me to understand that he had no desire to marry.

I was dumbfounded by this declaration; but then, convinced that he was hiding his feelings, I decided that I must speak clearly to him. I told him that everybody thought that he loved Hortense, that I thought so myself, and that the girl was of the same opinion; and I begged him to inform me how we were to take his attitude. His replies were not positive; I saw that he was embarrassed, and I imagined that, not being certain of the consent of Hortense or of her father, he did not wish to declare himself. I took it upon myself to assure him of both.

"At this moment, they arrived. After the usual salutations, I thought that the affair should be brought to a conclusion while it was under way. Hortense's father had already been informed by her of her inclination for the Prince of ***, and with his usual kindness he was the first to remove the difficulties that might arise. The marriage was arranged, and one of the conditions laid down by the future husband was that it should take place as quickly as possible.

"Hortense saw only eagerness in this desire, and she seemed flattered by it. As for me, I was not at all pleased with the prince's behaviour. His tone was affected; there was none of that truth, that frank and lively impulse of a heart that has met with happiness, and from that moment I was convinced that he yielded out of weakness and not out of love.

"I hid this discovery from Hortense; I persuaded myself now and then that I might have been mistaken, and I did not wish to pain her. Yet the Prince of *** showed so little warmth in everything he did that I

could not refrain from pointing this out to my friend. I should have liked her to have been able to see with my eyes; but prejudice blinded her, and this misplaced coldness became another of his qualities.

"Finally, the marriage took place at my country seat; you know that it is only two leagues from Paris, and it was easy to assemble there distinguished artists of all kinds. The celebrations were very lovely. The new Princess of *** was like a rose about to be caressed by the zephyr; her eyes shone with pleasure; they could not rest on her husband without becoming still more shining. He, on the other hand, would take himself off with his indolence, nearly always alone, to a distant clump of trees. His young wife, wholly absorbed in him, managed her walks in such a way that they were always in the direction of this clump, which concealed the object of her desires, and she was not received like a woman who, that same evening, was to give her husband his first taste of happiness.

"It is time to acquaint you with the cause of the abstraction of the Prince of ***. He had been living for a long time, as I told you, with Madame d'Ornano, the most tyrannical of women, and she did not hear of the marriage until two days before its celebration. It is impossible to describe her fury at the news; she wrote to the Prince of *** that she must absolutely see him, and, when the time appointed had passed without his appearing, she flew to his house. He was out; she waited. On his arrival, reproaches, tears, everything was brought into play. I have already said that the prince is weak; he was overborne; he confessed

himself guilty, said that there were all sorts of circumstances that were leading him to the altar, showed his repentance and the grief his marriage caused him, and obtained his pardon only by swearing that he would make no use of his conjugal rights, since he had been forced to marry. He promised everything, and it was the memory of this promise, which nobody could be aware of, that made him sad and melancholy.

" In the evening, however, carried away by his relations and yielding to the endearments of his wife, he could not refuse to share her bed; but it was not love that gathered the rose; another feeling occupied him. For about six weeks he was a husband; but, Madame d'Ornano reasserting her sway, he became nothing more than the indifferent friend of his wife. She set about finding means of bringing him back to her, without, however, daring to show too great forwardness. He made a great show of feeling, and when it chanced that his wife, unable to conceal her grief, seemed sad and melancholy for a moment, he would cry out that he was the most unfortunate of men, since his dear Hortense was not happy. In short, all his affection was in words and never in deeds.

" His wife who, perhaps because he was colder, was more in love with him than ever, suffered the torments of jealousy. She worshipped a man who withdrew even the hand she took to carry to her lips or heart. This slight show of affection was forbidden her, always, I acknowledge, with gentleness; but, in any case, her senses had to be kept in submission by the side of a husband whose own were calmness itself. She forced

herself to be reserved, and having all the appearance of happiness, she had none of the reality.

" One day, she went to her husband's room; he had gone out. She noticed some paper with writing, torn up into small pieces and thrown into the fireplace. She was alone; curiosity took possession of her. She picked up the bits of paper, put them together, and pasted them on a whole sheet in order to make out their sense. What was her grief when she saw that it was a letter from a woman, who seemed to have rights over her husband! What had she done that she was not so happy as her rival, whom she did not know ?

" Reason came to her aid, although slowly. After having mourned for two years, my Hortense felt that she must come to a decision, which was, that she must cure herself of a passion that was not shared. She esteems her husband; maybe she still loves him very much; but she is endeavouring to efface from her mind an impression that has made her unhappy for so long. She goes about in society in order to relieve the tedium of her life; nevertheless, she would always be eager to give back to her husband a heart that will hardly cease to be his".

Gontaut scarcely breathed during Madame de Luyne's story; his tears were on the point of falling. The Duchess of *** pitied her friend for having so singular a husband. I added my regrets to those of the company, and, at the bottom of my heart, I augured well of the attack I was premeditating. A woman who has loved her husband very much and who is neglected by him is half conquered.

On the following day, I returned to the Duchess of ***'s; but I did not find my new divinity there; and, as the duchess was about to set out visiting, I left her to go and see Madame Michelin. She smiled as I entered; but I found her extremely changed; her freshness had disappeared, and the worthy Michelin, coming in, told me of his anxieties about his wife's health. He said that he had a very good business, that all went well with him, that he endeavoured to meet his wife's wishes in everything, and that, nevertheless, she had some secret trouble that reduced her to the sad state in which she was. His wife consoled us, and said to us in a most touching tone of voice that she was not grieving about anything. The shopkeeper left us alone. I then asked Madame de Michelin what was the matter with her, since her husband complained of her melancholy.

"It is not for you to ask me that", she replied. "You know, Your Grace, all that has happened. I have neither the right nor the desire to reproach you in any way; you are the author of my sins; but your behaviour towards me has caused me a bitter expiation: the pain has been far greater than the pleasure".

She then stopped, and, after a sigh, asked me for news of my amusements. I remained some time with her, and she tried her hardest to seem gay. But she spoke to me of virtue, religion, the punishment of Heaven, and, when she saw that I was laughing at her sermon, she told me that I should die in my impenitence. Madame Renaud came in. I expected some distraction from her hearty gaiety, but I found a woman who

was anxious over the state of her friend, and who wept when the latter quietly announced her approaching end. As you may well believe, I treated this prediction as a chimera, and I endeavoured to dispel such gloomy notions, which were in no way amusing to me; but, seeing that my efforts were useless, I went off. I had long been tired of these two intrigues. These remorses, this double dose of devotion, this melancholy, all made me determined to wipe them from my mind; I made an oath not to go back any more and bury myself with two women whom I no longer loved; and, like Mercury, who took on the form of Sosia, and who afterwards went and cleaned himself on Olympus with ambrosia, I determined to wipe off the stain of these two common connections with the celestial Princess of ***.

On the same day, the rumour spread in Paris that the King's illness was becoming worse, and that there were fears for his life. I went to Versailles, where I was assured that he had at the most two or three days to live. He was already abandoned by all those who paid their court to the Duke of Orleans[1]. They were ranging themselves on the side of coming authority, and this great King was deserted by the servants who owed him everything; Madame de Maintenon even had retired to Saint-Cyr; Father le Tellier[2] had left his dying King to go intriguing in Paris. A few old officers

[1] Afterwards Regent during the minority of Louis XV. Philippe d'Orléans (1674-1723) was the nephew of Louis XIV.

[2] Michel le Tellier (1643-1719), Provincial of the Jesuits in France and confessor to Louis XIV.

alone showed their grief for the King in his pitiable ſtate; but many others were impatient to see him reach the end of his career.

At laſt, the moment arrived, the news of his death circulated in Paris, and was received there with pleasure; the people especially gave themselves up to such scandalous excesses of joy that you would have thought they had been delivered of a great scourge. They danced; they sang the coarseſt of songs againſt the Sovereign's memory. The refrain went from mouth to mouth, and the fermentation was so general that M. d'Argenson[1], Lieutenant of Police, was obliged to say that he would not answer for the people if the funeral procession passed through Paris.

The friends of the Duke of Orleans were not displeased over this outburſt of popular hatred againſt Louis XIV; they felt that the laſt wishes of a prince who was so little loved could be all the less respected, and that, in consequence, the Duke of Orleans would be able to assume all those rights the Sovereign's will deprived him of. But decent people were scandalised to see the fine and admirable things the King had done forgotten in transports of unpardonable joy.

I muſt acknowledge that the end of the reign of Louis XIV was very unhappy; but this was the fault of the miniſters, who had not had the necessary courage to conduct the war department properly. The too great piety of the King had perhaps also contributed to it, since it made him prefer the pious for places on the Council, or people who made a show of religion;

[1] Marc René de Voyer, Marquis d'Argenson (1651-1721).

they were chosen to the exclusion of those who had greater abilities. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes[1], which, though signed thirty years before, was still the cause of the shedding of blood in several provinces, had perhaps also paved the way for the miseries under which France then groaned, owing to the expulsion of many thousands of rich people. I am far from excusing him, but yet I hold that a king is the master in his own kingdom. The Catholic religion is the dominant one; he had sworn on coming to the Throne to maintain it, and Louis XIV had the right to prescribe a uniform religion. It was perhaps not altogether good policy to hunt the Protestants from the Kingdom; but Louis XIV had the power to require that his subjects should all be united by the same belief. It would perhaps have been better if he had left their consciences free; but it must be remembered that he was surrounded by priests, who are for the most part intolerant, and that the Revocation was their work rather than his.

It was also imputed to him as a crime that he caused a fatal war by his ambition to place his grandson, the Duke of Anjou, on the throne of Spain. What king would not be flattered by the idea of giving a crown to his son and of multiplying the kingdoms in his family ? Could he, without covering himself with shame, repudiate the testament of Charles II, who called the

[1] The Edict of Nantes (April 1598) gave religious liberty to the French Protestants. It was revoked by Louis XIV in 1685, and this led to religious persecution and to the emigration of many thousands of the French. The Revocation is almost unanimously condemned both for abstract and practical reasons.

Duke of Anjou[1] to the throne? I confess that this war was fatal; but, once again, the choice of ministers and of most of the generals was the cause. What was his aim in taking up arms? To assure the crown to his grandson. Did he not do it, and, despite its misfortunes and humiliations, does not this younger branch of the Bourbons still reign in Spain?

The French people, who are always extreme, and who were so indecent in their joy over the death of the greatest of their sovereigns, live only in the present moment, and found a pleasure in forgetting all that he had done. They no longer remembered the conquest of Franche-Comté and of a part of Flanders, which had increased the territories of the crown; the continual victories that had made the reign illustrious; and, if they reproached him for having loved war too much, they should at least have acknowledged that it was this taste for war that had formed Turenne, Condé, Luxembourg, Catinat, Créqui, Boufflers, Vendôme, Villars, those great generals whose reputation is immortal. What nation has had better seamen than Duquesne, Duguay-Trouin, Tourville, Jean Bart? What ministers are superior to Colbert and Louvois? Great men in all capacities succeeded one another with incredible rapidity: Bourdaloue, Bossuet, Massillon adorned the pulpit; Vauban fortified the towns; Pérrault and Mansard raised palaces; Pujet, Girardon, Le

[1] The Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Philip V of Spain (1683-1746), was the third son of Louis XIV. Charles II of Spain (1661-1700) was compelled by intrigues to leave the crown of Spain to Philip, and this led to the "fatal war" of the Spanish Succession. The present King of Spain is descended from Philip V.

Poussin, Le Sueur, Le Brun embellished them; Le Nôtre was their equal in the art of laying out gardens. This for ever memorable century was no less fertile in fine minds; Corneille, Molière, Racine, La Fontaine, Boileau, Fénelon are so many immortal writers, who attest its celebrity. The monuments that can still be cited in honour of this reign shall disappear; Versailles, the Invalides, Marly shall be no more; but the works of these great men will instruct the future that Louis XIV existed[1].

I still cannot recall without annoyance the indecencies of the people of Paris on the day of the interment of their Sovereign; the death of the most odious tyrant could not have given greater pleasure. He was made responsible for every misfortune; his death was regarded as a boon granted by Heaven. A few years of misfortune had destroyed everything; his past glory was nothing any more; the people cursed his memory, and coarsely insulted the coffin of a King of whom France will be eternally proud, and who could not be laid, without fear, in the tomb of his fathers.

Madame de Maintenon, after the death of the King, never left Saint-Cyr. Old and entirely given up to religion as she was, I very seldom went to see her. I had been accustomed to regard her as a second mother. The King could not have chosen a better mate; she was an affable, well-educated woman, whose conversation was a pleasure. He found in her that care and

[1] In a short note nothing but dates could be added to this list of the eminent persons of the age of Louis XIV, and the shortest biographical notices would occupy pages.

those attentions that a woman who is mild in manners and eager to please always renders endearing. He had become accustomed to seeing her every day; it was a need with him, and he poured out to her the domestic griefs that assailed him at the end of his career.

One well-founded reproach that might be made against Madame de Maintenon is that she led the King to be meticulous in his behaviour, and this gave the priests too great an ascendancy over him. She thought, in all good faith no doubt, that Louis XIV would be saved by a multiplicity of religious exercises. It is certain that from the day he became religious he lost the energy and firmness he had so often shown. He busied himself with details that were beneath a king, such as, for example, sending an order to live on good terms with their wives to those whose conduct was irregular. Religion does little harm in private persons; but, when it dominates a sovereign, it may change the course of events or produce persecutions. Madame de Maintenon's intentions were doubtless good; her actions may have been pure; but their consequences were not always happy.

I left Paris in order not to be a witness of a spectacle that displeased me. I had learned that my dear Princess of *** was at the country house of the wife of Marshal de Villars; love immediately turned me in that direction. I must tell you that the Marshal's wife was very fond of me, and that she had often repeated to me that I was charming. She did not hide the pleasure she felt at seeing me, and I resolved to take advantage of her good will. I knew that the Princess

of ***, who was distantly related to her, often visited her, and I decided to pay my court to Madame de Villars in order to have an opportunity of seeing my dear princess freely. The Marshal's wife was no longer young, but she was amiable, and there were still good moments to be had with her.

She was astonished and delighted to see me. I did not fail to attribute my arrival to my eagerness to pay my court to her, and there was no praise of me that she omitted for having thus surprised her. The Princess of *** did not appear until dinner; she was more beautiful than ever; she blushed when she saw me, and her complexion became more brilliant. I augured well of this beginning, and I watched for the moment to be private with her.

I waited some time; but at last she went alone into the garden, and took a path away from the house. I was not long in joining her. The conversation at first was indifferent; soon she had no further doubt that I loved her. This declaration was received without anger; the Marshal's wife, who was always singing my praises, had inclined her heart in my favour, and I saw quite well that with care she would not be very cruel. However, I was mistaken a little. Although the Princess of *** had seemed to me to receive my avowal favourably, and, during the first moment, had yielded to the pleasure she felt at being with me, reflexion gave her the weapons to resist when she was by herself again.

On the following day, I had another opportunity of speaking to her alone; her ingenuousness, her frankness made her heavenly in my eyes; but, distrusting her

strength, she felt that she must put a distance between herself and a man who appeared dangerous to her. I learned that same evening, with the greatest concern, that she had departed for Paris.

I could not sleep the whole night; the agitation this flight caused me was too great to allow me to rest. I cursed and swore over her departure, which had also surprised everybody else, and my first idea was to return to Paris myself. I was held back by the regard I owed Madame de Villars; I could no longer doubt that she loved me: the first evening of my arrival had convinced me of it; and, as it was essential not to quarrel with her, in order to be free to see the Princess of ***, I remained the week I had promised to stay when I arrived. It seemed centuries to me. When the time was up, the Marshal's wife, who was delighted with me, wanted me to extend it; but I told her that I had such urgent business to attend to that it was not possible for me to remain any longer.

My first visit was to the Duchess of ***. I was not so well served by chance as the first time. The Princess of *** was not there. The duchess was still my best friend, and, in spite of my impatience to have news of the princess, I spent some very agreeable moments with the duchess. I was careful to lead the conversation round to her friend, and I learned that, being wearied of Paris, she was urging her husband to go and spend some time on an estate they had in Anjou. I was dumbfounded by this proposal, but I was soon reassured by learning that the husband had not been indulgent enough to leave Paris. The

duchess also told me that the Princess of *** was coming to supper with her that same day, and the invitation she gave me to join them, as you may well believe, was not refused[1].

My presence produced the same effect on the princess; she blushed on seeing me. The conversation was very gay; and the desire to please made me use every means of being amiable. I succeeded well enough; I held the attention of the company, and I saw that the princess was delighted with the praise I received: we enjoy the glory of those we love. The Duchess of *** herself seemed intoxicated with pleasure, and I am certain that, if I had been alone with her, her fine plans of platonic friendship would have been destroyed by love.

Playfully, I took the hand of the Princess of ***, and filched from her a ring she was wearing; her look was at first a little severe; but it immediately became indulgent. I pressed her hand; I brought into play all the little tricks of love, and all went well. I asked the princess in a low voice for permission to come and see her; her silence was taken for consent, and I made use of it on the following day.

The wife of Marshal de Villars had written to me, and, chance thus coming to my aid, she asked me to call on the Princess of ***, to whom she had written at the same time, to urge the latter to return to her country house; she ordered me to accompany the princess. You can judge how agreeable this errand

[1] In all this there are several details resembling the attitude of Valmont to Madame de Tourvel in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*.

was to me. I found that great booby, the Prince of ***, in his wife's rooms; he had come, according to his daily custom, to ask after her health. He kissed her three or four times in front of me, saying:

" You see my Hortense; she is my treasure".

But his air was so icy that it agreed in no way at all with his words. He had tedium written on his face and in his actions; in spite of his good, well-proportioned figure, he rarely looked as he should have done; his vaporous, undefinable character influenced his physique.

I communicated Madame de Villar's letter, and immediately the husband cried:

" Well, you must start off. You wished to go to the country, my dear; this is an opportunity you must take advantage of; that is my opinion".

It was mine; and the Prince of ***, who never paid long visits, left it to us to fix the day of departure.

I expressed to the Princess of *** my eagerness to accompany her to Madame de Villars's; but she was extremely reserved, and she told me that she could not take advantage of the invitation so soon. She was infinitely skilful in avoiding the slightest word that might bring the conversation round once more to the chapter of love. I made a show of her ring, which I had put on my finger; but she said nothing about it, and another caller came in before I had been able to say any word to her of my love, except in passing.

I went to the Duchess of ***'s every day for a week without meeting my princess. The duchess seemed pleased with me for my assiduity; but, though she may

have been pleased, I was scarcely satisfied. I had presented myself several times at the Princess of ***'s door, and each time had been told that she was out. I saw plainly that she was avoiding me; I concluded that I was loved, and that I must wait patiently for a favourable moment to bring me a victory that could not be long withheld from me.

The Duchess of ***, who had already done me several good services without knowing it, was once more as obliging on this occasion. Tired of not seeing her friend, she hurried to her house, and, without listening to her excuses, brought her back to supper with her. I had contracted the habit of going every evening to the Duchess of ***'s, and I was agreeably surprised to meet there the woman I was seeking so vainly. There were only the three of us; the Duchess was in a sentimental mood, and confessed to her friend that she had heard of her troubles. We both condoled with her; she persisted for some time in hiding them from us, but in the end she confessed to us what Madame de Luynes had already told us.

It is impossible to describe my pleasure at hearing the woman I loved enter, blushing, into the details of her life with her husband. When she stopped, she was encouraged by the Duchess of *** to go on with her story. I saw that she still loved her husband, but that his behaviour must necessarily bring about his wife's fall. I looked at her with the conviction that all I saw and all that was hidden from my eyes would soon be in my possession. I knew women well enough to be aware that you can obtain everything from them

when you are clever enough to take advantage of two passions that animate them — vengeance and the attraction of pleasure.

After I had become her confidant, the order that shut the princess's door to me was raised. I often went to see her, and I condoled with her in all good faith for not having a husband who better appreciated her merits. I told her that, if my wife had resembled her, I should have accounted myself a happy man to have had rights over her; and that, far from neglecting them, I should have hastened to enjoy them. I assured her that I should have loved a wife like her, and that chance had served me badly in withholding from me the pleasure of meeting her at a time when we were both free. I felt what I said, and when a man feels keenly what he says he is nearly always eloquent.

Persuasion was entering the heart of the Princess of ***; she still was silent about her love for me, but her eyes were more indiscreet; I saw my happiness there and the pleasures that were awaiting me.

Madame de Villars had come to Paris and had taken the Princess of *** away with her. She had sent me word to go and see her, and I had to promise to return to her country house. I had promised unwillingly, not knowing whether the princess would be of the party; but, as soon as I heard of her departure, I prepared to set out immediately.

On the evening before the day of my departure, I met the worthy Michelin, who passed my carriage; he was in deep mourning. Something made me pull the cord to stop. I learned with a shock that made me feel

ill that his wife had been buried two days before. The man's eyes were flowing with tears as he spoke to me. I was touched, and, despite myself, the tears came into my eyes too. As the place was inconvenient for an explanation, I made him get into my carriage, after asking him whether he could come home with me for a moment. We soon reached my house, and there the worthy shopkeeper began to sob worse than ever.

When his sorrow had abated a little, he told me that he had lost the most virtuous and respectable of wives, and that I would remember that, when I had last been to see them, he remarked to me on his wife's melancholy. He added that since then it had gone on increasing, that he had tried every possible means of distracting her, but that it had all been in vain.

"You see, Your Grace", he continued, "what sort of creatures we are; how illness takes all our judgment from us. The poor woman, who was gentleness and virtue itself, asked my forgiveness before dying, as though she had offended me!"

His simplicity might have amused me if I had been less agitated; but I was really affected; and the thought of poor Madame Michelin's death filled my mind. I feared that I was the author of it, and I had a twinge of conscience that made me feel uncomfortable.

He informed me, continuing his story, that he had taken his wife to Saint-Cloud to amuse her; that, not having been able to obtain a carriage in which to return, they had done a part of the journey on foot; that she had become very hot, and that, having got cold again immediately afterwards, she had contracted inflamma-

tion of the lungs; that, having been weak and ill for some long time, she had had no resistance left; that she had had a canker-worm that had undermined her for some time, but that he did not know what it was. The man lost himself in surmises over the cause of his wife's troubles, which I easily guessed.

I received the same evening a letter from Madame Renaud, informing me of the death of her friend. I will copy it here because of its singularity:

"Your Grace,

"A good woman, who committed no other fault, as well as the one who is writing to you, than that of loving you too much, died the day before yesterday in my arms. Your behaviour to her caused her to undergo her purgatory in this world; so I firmly believe that the poor deceased is in Paradise, where she promised me to pray to God for you and me; because you must know that in her sorrow for the sins you caused her to commit she still thought of you. She asked me to write to you that you must be converted, because you had not only your own sins to expiate, but also those of others. She told me that she forgave you; so you will have that the less on your conscience. I have been so upset that I have not been able to write sooner what I had been asked to do by the last wishes of Madame Michelin. She died the loveliest death possible, and if you had been a witness of it, it would have pierced your heart. She asked everybody's forgiveness. When we were alone she spoke of you continually, and she sorrowed over her weakness, which

is also mine. She urged me to tell you to turn over a new leaf, because nobody knows, as you can see by her, when death will strike. She also made me promise not to see you any more, so as not to imperil my salvation. However, if you will behave yourself, that ought not to prevent me from asking you to lunch, so that we can talk about our dear friend, who died like a saint.

"I am, etc."

I was in no humour to accept her proposal, and I replied to her that I was too grieved by the news I had received to go back to a house where everything would call up sad memories; and I advised her to keep faith with Madame Michelin, and to carry out the last wishes of her friend.

I spent that evening sadly enough; but I was aware that it is not prudent to brood over a sorrow, and I went to see the Duchess of ***, with whom I found Gontaut. The talk was all about the Princess of ***'s journey, and the pleasure of listening to conversation about her immediately restored my good spirits.

The Duchess of *** bantered Gontaut greatly on the interest he showed in her friend; he did not deny it, confessed that he was very much in love, and that he would give everything in the world to please her; but what he said was assurance enough that his suit was falling on deaf ears. My self-esteem found satisfaction in this, for it is always a pleasure to hear the plaints of your rivals.

I was received by the company in the manner I expected, that is to say, very well indeed; Madame de

Villars was wildly gay; the Princess of *** mildly gay, a contrast that seemed much more attractive to my eyes. Madame de Villars whispered to me at supper not to go to bed without coming to have a little talk with her in her room. I appeared very eager to obey, and, at the bottom of my heart, I raged against this constraint, because I had intended to pay a visit to the princess.

On the following morning, I was recompensed; I saw her go out for a walk in a charming wood, which was a hundred yards away from the house, and love quickly guided my footsteps in the same direction. She heard someone walking behind her, and stopped on seeing me. I took her hand and kissed it. I told her how great a pleasure it was to see her again, and she was sincere enough not to hide her own pleasure. We spent an hour delightfully discussing love; her eyes became wet with those delicious tears that pleasure gives. We spoke of her husband, and, gazing amorously at her, I assured her that it was incredible that he could neglect her.

" Has he no eyes!" I cried.

The Princess of *** gave me some most interesting details; she spoke of her husband's behaviour indoors, of the precautions she took in order not to disturb him; she told me that one evening, tired of having heard her husband sigh for two days, and of seeing him more melancholy than usual, she had ventured on asking him what was the matter. Receiving no reply, she had added that he did not love her. This word brought the Prince of *** out of his lethargy.

"I do not love my Hortense!" he cried. "Oh, Heavens! she thinks I do not love her; how unfortunate I am! It is all over; my peace of mind is gone! I am the cause of her unhappiness, I know; I shall never get over it".

She was obliged to soothe the agitation into which he appeared to have been thrown, by assuring him that she was joking. The Princess of *** threw herself into his arms; she expected that the issue of this scene would be happy for her; but it was confined to a few kisses, and the husband, as glacial as ever, retired without confirming her happiness.

It is easy to conceive the state of a woman at such a moment. If we had the art of divining such favourable moments, the number of women subjugated would be much greater than it is. The Princess of ***'s story showed how sweet, mild and sociable her character was. I burned to be in the place of this inimitable husband, and I vowed that I would show her so great a difference between him and me that she would have reason to be astonished. We separated much pleased; she begged me not to show her more preference than the other women, in order to avoid gossip.

Madame de Villars was accustomed to having me in her room each evening to talk to her, and I did not know how to stop this; I saw that there was nothing else to do except to pretend to be ill; but what frightened me was the diet I should have to submit to in order to make my illness credible[1]. I told my valet that for reasons of health I must remain a day or two in my room, and

[1] Laclos attributes a similar device to Valmont.

I ordered him to bring me food without anyone's knowing. The order was carried out.

On the following morning, my valet announced that I had passed a dreadful night, and that I was very ill. The alarm soon spread. Madame de Villars was the first to arrive; and I had to endure attentions that plagued me exceedingly; she brought her surgeon with her. I complained of a frightful colic; the sawbones found that I had no fever; however, he felt he had to order me a sedative. I twisted myself about in order to play my part better. People were surprised not to find me more changed; but Madame de Villars, believing me already dead, said that the malady had not well had time to alter my features. She wanted to give me herself a potion that had just been prepared; I protested in vain; her tears and prayers made me yield, and I swallowed with loathing the beverage I needed so little.

I was going to beg the ladies who were in my room to retire when the one for whom I was playing this comedy arrived; but I refrained from expressing my desire to be alone. She came up to my bed with an air of the most tender anxiety, and took me by the hand, which she pressed; her eyes fixed themselves on me, and never were eyes more eloquent. The moment was delicious, and I thought that, if my illness had been real, it would have been capable of restoring me to health.

Finally, Madame de Villars herself said that I must be left quiet, that a crowd of visitors would fatigue me, and that what I most needed was rest.

The Princess of *** seemed to tear herself away from me rather than to retire naturally; her face expressed the agitation of her heart. Everybody went out; Madame de Villars alone established herself by my bed, and said that she would be my nurse. This was not what I had bargained for, and I did my best to oppose this excess of zeal. I had a great deal of trouble in making her go away; I had to insist most strongly, and to threaten to get up if she persisted any longer.

When she had gone, I had everything flung away that had been prepared for me and that I had been strongly recommended to take. I sat down to write, and I ordered my valet to allow only the surgeon and the Princess of *** to enter, and, when she was with me, to guard the lobby carefully and tell everybody that I was asleep.

Madame de Villars came several times, and, not being able to enter, she sent the surgeon, who was told that I had the greatest need of quiet. My valet was interrupted by all the people in the house coming to inquire about me, but the Princess of *** did not appear; she had only sent, which was not sufficient for me.

The provisions which my valet had prepared became very necessary, for I think I never had a greater appetite than on that day. Privation makes a need keener and more urgent. I made a very good meal without cooking or abundance of dishes, hunger giving to what I ate an exquisite taste.

Towards evening, the princess came herself, to ask

my man how I was; she hesitated about entering for fear of disturbing me; but he had had his lesson, and he was careful to persuade her to visit me; he announced her. I was on my bed, and I signed to him to keep a strict guard.

She trembled, and her timidity had an inexpressible charm for me. The interest she showed was so sincere, so delicious, that I forgot the part I had begun to play, to yield entirely to the pleasure I felt. I told her that her presence had driven my illness away, and that a doctor like her would banish all sickness. I took her in my arms; she tried to resist, but, in spite of her struggles, I dragged her to the bed.

"Here then", I said to her, "is the divinity neglected by a husband who does not know her value! What enchanting details that should hold him eternally to his homage! What a pretty hand!" At the same time, I covered it with kisses. "What arms! Is it possible not to press to one's heart so slender a waist!"

With these words, I embraced her with delight; her heart beat violently; mine was agitated; they seemed to come to an understanding, and it was the moment of happiness. One or two cries tried to escape from her, but I stopped them with my mouth. I said that the valet might hear us, and the Princess of ***, timorous, carried away by pleasure, obeyed only the law I imposed on her.

Each of her charms received a particular offering, and I recompensed her, although rather rapidly, for having been neglected so long. The Princess of ***,

when she had recovered, was astonished at the delight I showed; she thought I was very ill, and yet this interview proved to her that I was exceedingly well. I assured her that my illness was imaginary, and that what I had done had had no other aim than to bring her to my room. I begged her to allow me to spend the night with her. The time we had just had together, although very short, had shown her that there was a great difference between her husband and me, and, after some slight objections, the permission I asked for was granted. We agreed that at midnight I should tap softly twice on the door of her room, and that this would be the signal for her to open.

As soon as she had left me, my valet received orders to let in everybody who called; in less than an hour I had nearly all the company in the house gathered together in my room. They thought I was very much better, and Madame de Villars attributed my recovery to the rest I had just taken. I said that I was very weak, and that I was afraid that I should need several days to recuperate completely.

I waited impatiently for the hour of my assignation, and I went to it with even greater pleasure. At the signal agreed upon, I was let in, and, while everybody thought I was in bed, recovering my strength in beneficent sleep, I was tasting the most perfect pleasures of love. The princess became aware once more of the enormous difference between a lover who loves, and a husband whose feelings consist only in phrases. The prince told her sometimes that she was charming, and I spent every minute of that night

in proving it to her. I left her before daybreak, not without reciprocal vows of fidelity.

Madame de Villars came early in the morning to inquire herself after my health, and, as the fatigues of the night had made me somewhat pale, she cried out that it could be seen from my face how much I had suffered. She urged me strongly to keep to my room; but, unfortunately, my provisions had not been replenished, and I was suffering from a hunger that made me fear abstinence.

The Princess of *** came with the other women to inquire about me, and I took advantage of a moment when she alone could hear me to ask her to find the means to repair my strength. I felt weak and had a great need of food. She returned shortly afterwards, when the visits had ceased, with everything necessary, and this slight meal, prepared by the hands of beauty, seemed a thousand times more delicious to me.

She escaped during the morning to pay me a visit unknown to everybody, and I proposed a second assignation for that night; she hesitated a little, but love soon decided her for the same hour as the evening before.

This night was no less delicious than the previous one. The Princess of ***, who, like other women, had senses that commanded her sometimes, found in a skilful lover every assistance to make them speak louder; she was astonished at the strength of a pleasure which she scarcely knew, and which I had the talent to increase for her. Her ecstasy was a new source of satisfaction for me; I had the good fortune to have

a docile pupil, who was delighted with the discoveries I caused her to make, and who had received from her first master nothing but feeble, elementary lessons which had been forgotten, they had been given so long ago. The night until daybreak was a succession of delicious moments, which I can compare only with those the Duchess of *** had given me.

My princess was setting out that same day for Paris, and I was careful to go down into the drawing-room before anybody paid me a visit. I announced that, feeling much better, I was resolved to return home, where my doctor would perhaps purge me. Madame de Villars tried to oppose my departure, but, seeing that I was determined, she told me that a sick man must at least have company, and that the Princess of *** would certainly not refuse to give me a place in her carriage, so that I should not have to go off alone in mine.

I had not dared to propose this for fear of giving rise to suspicions; but the charming wife of the Marshal removed every obstacle, and rendered me the most signal service. I pretended to be afraid of incommoding the Princess of ***, who replied that a sick friend was never a burden to true friendship. It was decided by Madame de Villars, who ordered matters like a queen, that the princess's maid should go in my carriage with my valet, and that we two should occupy the princess's and be less incommoded thus. This arrangement gave us a privacy that was a pleasure to both of us.

On my return to Paris, I received reproachful letters

from Madame Daverne, who had been the mistress of the Regent, and whom I had had merely for the pleasure of making him a cuckold. I had amused myself courting the women he had, and it was not the first time his rival had been successful. The Prince was not jealous; but he was always finding me at his heels, and sometimes he showed ill-temper when he was supplanted; but it did not last.

He had almost surprised me in the act with the Duchess de Berry; as is well-known, he always took a most affectionate interest in his daughters, and yet he shut his eyes to their weaknesses, content to share them.

I had broken with Mademoiselle de Charolais[1]. I was no longer liable to be followed, for, when she was dominated by jealousy, I was quite certain of never taking a step without a spy. There was even a day when a servant of mine beat one of these spies so violently that he died a few days afterwards; and I was obliged to write to d'Argenson to tell the wife that she must keep silent about it: she wanted to complain. This princess was beautiful, but haughty; her love was passionate rather than tender; yet there were moments when nobody was more affectionate. When she believed herself without a rival, there was nothing she would not do to please her lover; but the least suspicion soured her; she then remembered that she was a princess of the Blood, and her imperious air would have imposed on anyone but me. She soon saw that she gave herself

[1] Louise Anne de Bourbon; she was the third daughter of Louise Françoise de Bourbon, who was the second daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

useless trouble, and in her rages she stopped thrusting her rank at me.

We often had quarrels, but the slightest advance from me reconciled us. The tricks she employed to enable us to see each other are incredible; I will tell you about them when I come to speak of her after our reconciliation. I will relate to you meanwhile an adventure, which, if it had become public, as it might have done, would have ruined her completely with her family, who regarded her connection with me unfavourably.

We were accustomed to meet in the garden of the Hôtel de Condé on the days when there was no moon, and there, on an out-of-the-way bench at the end of the garden we talked of our love. Sometimes, the room of one of the princess's wardrobe-women served us as an asylum for more particular conversations. As she did not like making use of a third party, we seldom employed this means, because she might have been seen going in, which would have appeared suspicious. One day when she was free, she sent me word to meet her opposite Grey Friars' Church; we had already met there several times on evenings when the moonlight banished us from the garden. On these occasions, she dressed herself very modestly, wrapped her head up in a coif, and, followed by the wardrobe-woman, who alone spoke to the doorkeeper, leaving and returning, she passed for a friend, the man being far from suspecting that it was the princess who was going out on foot.

At the appointed place, the woman left us when I

arrived; she went to see a relation in the neighbourhood and returned at the time fixed. I did not use my carriage; I hired one; the princess took her place in it by my side, and, while rolling about Paris, this mean vehicle was transformed for us into an altar of love. The day I have just mentioned brought the same pleasures to us; but the princess, who, during the ride, had acquired a rather violent headache, and who was fatigued by the jolts of the carriage, which were that day heavier than usual, proposed that we should finish the journey to Grey Friars' on foot. She hoped that the walk and the fresh air would cure this disagreeable headache.

We were on the Pont Neuf. At the entrance to the rue Dauphine, an ill-dressed man, some kind of shopkeeper, came up to us, and, after having considered Mademoiselle de Charolais's figure—her face was partly hidden—cried out:

"It is she! I have found her again!"

This exclamation frightened the princess, who urged me to go on more quickly. But the man did not leave us, and had the insolence to try to lift the princess's coif in order to see her better. She cried out. A punch applied to the middle of his face was his reward, and it made him stagger back a few paces. Blood flowed from his nose; he made a frightful noise, howling:

"Murder! Thieves! They are stealing my wife!"

We hurried on. I saw that this scene was about to become tiresome; I reassured the princess; and I conjured her not to be afraid and not to speak at all.

Some shopkeepers, who had been brought out of their shops by the man's shouts, barred our way. I was without arms, and dressed very simply, and I saw that resistance was useless. The watch, which unfortunately was making its rounds in that quarter, was called, and I judged that there was nothing else to do but myself to demand to be taken to the police office. The man had come up to us, still shouting for his wife to be given back to him. The crowd that accompanied him also raised a hue and cry over us, and showed its joy at seeing us punished.

The princess was in a dreadful state; she trembled at the idea of being recognised, and cursed her fatal desire to go on foot. We arrived at the police office in the rue de la Comédie-Française. Our man, or rather our devil, recommenced his complaints before the officer of police, and declared more positively than ever that the princess was his wife. He was a perfumer of the rue de Bassi, whose wife had disappeared two years before, abducted as he thought. I saw that the officer of the police was disposed to take action. The man had already asked that the princess should uncover her face completely; he had gone up to her, and threatened her with the convent and with punishment. All my fears and hers were that she might be recognised. I went up to the officer of police.

"Take care!" I whispered to him. "I am the Duke of Richelieu; and I do not wish to be named".

This declaration changed the attitude of the man, who was already frowning on us, so much had the

complainant's story impressed him. I then addressed the man who claimed to be the husband of Mademoiselle de Charolais.

"This lady is my mistress", I said to him. "I am willing to tell you that she belongs to the Opera; but she is not your wife, whom I have never seen or known. It is quite easy to convince you of this; but remember that, if you persist in your complaint, I will have you sent to Bicêtre".

I thought that at this word, the man was going to jump out of his skin. Sent to Bicêtre! A respectable person who was merely taking back his lost property! . . . At the same time, he tried to take the princess by the arm; a second punch punished him for his temerity. The officer of police, raising his voice, told him that he was lacking in respect for his office, that he could see quite well that his complaint was without foundation, and that, to punish him for having had respectable persons arrested and having forgotten the respect due to justice, he condemned him to spend the night in the Châtelet. This sentence was received with cries and oaths, that hastened his punishment all the more, and on the following day d'Argenson gave orders to have him taken to Bicêtre, where he remained six months to teach him to be more circumspect.

We remained with the officer of police until the crowd which was at the door had gone away. He made me a thousand excuses for not having rendered me straightway all the honours due to my rank; he offered to go himself to the Lieutenant of Police to get the order signed which was to take to Bicêtre the shop-

keeper who had insulted us. In short, we had reason to be pleased with him. I had occasion afterwards to render this man some service, and I did it with pleasure. He sent out for a carriage for us, and I conducted the princess, who had not yet got over her fright, to Grey Friars', where her faithful companion awaited her. She swore to me that she would never expose herself again in this way; and this adventure cured her of the desire to make similar assignations with me, which until then she had never failed to do at every opportunity.

I was therefore delivered for the moment from the importunities of Mademoiselle de Charolais, who was nearly always informed of my doings, and whose vigilant jealousy I feared. I had also got rid of Madame de Guébriant, who, during one of my absences, had sought to console herself with de Broglie, and who wrote to me, on my return, a letter expressing her sorrow over my infidelities. She was unaware that I was informed of her conduct, and her reproaches seemed to me so out of place and I was so much annoyed by them, that, in a moment of ill-temper, I wrote at the bottom of her letter, which she had ended by begging me to send my carriage for her to the kitchen courtyard of the Palais-Royal:

> "The place you appoint is very well chosen; you can stay in the kitchen courtyard, for you are fit only to charm scullions. Goodbye, my little angel."

You can well imagine that I heard nothing more from her for a long time. I was well pleased to be free

of interference from others, in order to enjoy without hindrance the taste I had for the Princess of ***, which still seemed to me to be likely to last longer than the others.

The apartment I had had furnished for poor Madame de Michelin stood us in good stead; I gave her a key of it; the one of us that was the more diligent waited for the other, and we wrote to each other there about our arrangements. The Princess of *** wanted to preserve her reputation intact, and had directed me to visit her but seldom; she wished it to appear in society that I was showing her no particular preference; our private meetings recompensed us for this slight constraint. The Duchess of ***, at whose house I often saw the princess, had no suspicion of our connection. I was informed of all the visits the princess made, and either in one house or another, a quiet word was sufficient to make an assignation. We never appeared anywhere together, and I would have defied the cleverest to guess our intrigue. I therefore believe that it is the only one that was not known. It was not of long duration; but, for the eight months it lasted, it escaped the malicious tongues of the public.

One day, I found in the apartment a long letter from the Princess of ***, on which I could still see the traces of her tears; she acquainted me that her husband, after having been definitely and finally dismissed by Madame d'Ornano, had probably found nothing better to do than to fall in love with his wife; that she had at first taken his attentions as a joke; but that it had soon become apparent that he was really seeking a reconci-

liation; that her love for me rendered her husband's caresses odious to her; and that she would die rather than be unfaithful to me, for she regarded it as an infidelity to fulfil the conjugal duties he had so long neglected. She told me of an almost tragic scene that had taken place that same night.

He had wanted to share her bed; in vain did she tell him that she was unwell: nothing could prevent him from entering her bed. The prince, who, during the time he was loved, had disdained the enjoyment of a wife who often sighed for him in her loneliness, had, by a fairly common mischance, returned to claim the rights he had neglected at a time when the heart of the princess was no longer his. She tried to escape from the bed; but, held down by her husband, who endeavoured to profit by his advantage, she showed a resistance and obstinacy that astonished him. Nothing seemed more dreadful to her than to be unfaithful to the lover she adored; she threatened her husband, if he continued, to turn her frenzy against herself, by dashing her head against the bedside table.

The prince, frightened by this threat, and rendered calmer by the fatigue of the struggle, which had lasted some time, promised his wife to be quieter if she would listen to him. He complained of her steadfast refusal, and assured her that, since he was so unfortunate as not to be forgiven, he would in future employ every means to make his peace with her. He acknowledged the wrongs he had done her, swore to repair them, and to worship for the rest of his life a wife whom he had never done enough justice to. He then left her, and

cited his retirement as a first proof of his submission and of the desire he had to please her.

This letter made me jealous; I thought it astonishing that a husband who had taken no notice of his wife should want to have her back without any motive. I had accustomed myself to the idea of being sole possessor of the Princess of ***, and I could not brook the notion of a rival. I wrote to her; when she arrived she confirmed what she had written. Her fears were increasing; the prince left her but little; he was waiting on her hand and foot, like the most affectionate of lovers; but she confessed to me that her attachment for me turned what would have once made her happiness into a dreadful torture. I urged her to persist in her resolution not to yield. I was careful to point out to her that her husband was so ardent in pursuit of her only out of contrariety and obstinacy, because he saw that his attentions pained her; and I had no great difficulty in persuading a woman whose heart seconded my advice.

She swore to me on a couch and kissing me, to die rather than to grant anything to her husband; all the rights ought to belong to me; love gave them to me, and happy love made a vow to preserve them exclusively for me. Repeated ecstasies accompanied this vow, and, on the most charming altar in the world, I promised, covering it with kisses, always to remember this delicious moment and the sacrifice that she had just made for me.

The Prince of *** was really in love with his wife. His love had increased in proportion as it was found to

be unwelcome. Supplanted by a luckier lover, banished from Madame d'Ornano's house, he had had to listen to his reason, which told him that she was a coquette. The bands of love had fallen from his eyes; he saw her as she was, haughty, imperious, sacrificing everything to her caprices, and he could not conceive how he had had the heart to live with her so long. He became aware of the torture a woman with so pronounced a character can put upon a man, and he felt that every good quality disappears when a woman is lacking in sweet ways.

The comparison he made between her and his wife brought him to a still better knowledge of the princess's value: she was a treasure he had buried. Agreeableness was the first virtue of a woman; without it a man was seldom happy: he knew by experience. He found this happiness at home; the princess was pretty, but her agreeable nature, yielding in everything, was the greatest of blessings for a husband.

The prince's assiduities, which we thought would not last very long, increased day by day. He was the timid, fearful lover, who watched for opportunities to please his mistress. He did not doubt but that his wife was annoyed over his past behaviour, but he hoped that his present conduct would bring her back to him more in love than ever.

Yet he perceived that he was making no progress; he thought that the influence of friends would accelerate the happy moment that he was impatiently awaiting. He applied to the Duchess of *** who became the confidant of his sorrows, and who sought to reconcile

the two spouses. She told me everything, and I made my arrangements accordingly.

The Princess of ***, who was obsessed by her husband, could come less often to the apartment. As we had agreed, I rarely called on her, and the necessity for filling this void sent me back into society. It was at this time that I became acquainted with the Marchioness de Villeroy, whom I knew more intimately later on.

I also went very frequently to see the Duchess of ***, where I found the Prince of *** telling her his troubles. Out of idleness, I let my fancy turn to the duchess again, and I resolved to renew with her. There would be no difficulty in this, I thought, because she always showed me very great friendship. Chance accelerated the success of the new plan I had made.

The father of the Princess of *** had fallen ill in the country, and his daughter had hastened to his side. The Duchess of *** also set out for Mantes, and, although Mademoiselle de Charolais had already made overtures for a reconciliation, I preferred to go and surprise the Duchess of ***, to whom my arrival gave great pleasure. I had provided myself with the key I had had made in the old days, and I wanted to avoid all formalities in reasserting my ancient rights over her. I spent the whole day in the employment of those methods of pleasing which were nearly always successful with me, and I thought I should find little obstacle to my designs.

Since the Duchess of *** had decided to live simply as a friend with me, I had not noticed that she had

engaged in any intrigue whatever. I frequently called on her, and it would have been easy for me to see whether she showed any marked preferences; on the contrary, I had observed that they were all for me. Her lips, which gave utterance to fine resolutions of good conduct, were belied by her eyes, where pleasure spoke in spite of her. I was convinced that I was still loved, and, in this conviction, I went, when I thought everybody asleep, to the duchess's room.

The key worked wonderfully. The Duchess of *** was reading, and seemed much astonished to see me arriving in a costume that announced my intention.

"Really, Monsieur de Richelieu", she said, "what are you thinking about? What! You still have that key! . . . I hope that you are going back to your room".

I sometimes amused myself by playing the child with her. I went down on my knees before her bed, clasped my hands, and, in a childish voice, I asked pardon for my boldness. I told her that I was afraid all alone, and that I had come to her for comfort; that I was a poor orphan needing protection, and that Heaven had commanded that protection should be given to the orphan.

My gestures, my attitude, my way of speaking, all made her laugh, and I was in her bed before she could proffer a word. There her plans and resolutions vanished; they were too much in conflict with her heart; and, though reason had exercised its sway over

her heart so long, her heart won a complete victory in that moment. I experienced as keen a pleasure as on the first occasions, and my love for the Princess of *** seemed entirely extinguished, or to have transferred itself to another object. Our mutual intoxication lasted a long time; we recompensed each other for a long privation, and she was amazed at herself for having sacrificed such delicious moments to reason.

The Duchess of ***, from the reserved friend that she had been for me, became the most tender mistress; entirely abandoned to her present happiness, she gave no thought for the future; she said to me only as I left her:

"Ah! my dear; this is a night that will make me unhappy for a long time".

I assured her that, if she liked, she would never be unhappy; I promised to be as faithful to her as I could, and I told her that, if she loved me, she would close her eyes to my errant fancies, in which my heart was seldom involved.

"We must love our friends with all their faults", she said with a sigh.

On the following day, I returned to Paris, hoping to receive news of the Princess of ***, who was to have written to me, under an assumed name, at the address of a shopkeeper who lived near my little apartment. He was called Joly, *At the Spinning Sow*. Indeed, I did find a letter awaiting me, by which she informed me that, as her father was much better, she hoped to be able to set out in a few days for the country house of our friend, the Duchess of ***.

Madame de Villars had returned to Paris, and sent word, asking me to go and have supper with her; I found there Mademoiselle de Charolais, who scarcely deigned to look at me; she thought it would annoy me; but, affecting to take no notice of her or her disdain, I entered into a lively conversation with Madame de la Rochefoucauld, who was charming; the jokes I made sent her into fits of laughter, which drew several people over to us. Our mirth spread; I was in very high spirits, and everybody seemed to be amused at my fooleries. Madame de Villars could not help leaving Mademoiselle de Charolais, who was talking with Madame de Soubise[1], in order to join us, and soon the whole company was with us.

Mademoiselle de Charolais, who was vexed at not being with the others, came towards us at last saying:

"Everybody seems to be very happy here?"

"Our happiness will be all the greater if you will join us", I answered, taking her by the hand; and I began again the anecdote I had started. The Princess, whose face cleared, complimented me upon it, and I could see that the company formed the opinion that this was a step towards our reconciliation. As a fact, her amiability manifested a desire to please, and I thought myself that it would not be difficult for me to reassert the rights over her that I had abandoned. This, however, did not then enter into my plans, and I left immediately after supper, in order to avoid any explanation.

[1] Wife of the Prince de Soubise, aide-de-camp to Louis XV.

On my return home, I found a note from Madame Daverne, who was going to give an entertainment at Saint-Cloud to Madame d'Estrées[1], at which the Regent was to be present. It was couched in these terms:

> "Although you do not deserve to have the slightest notice taken of you, although you are the last man in the world on whom a woman can count, I wish to prove to you once more that I am one of those women who cannot help thinking of you. I am giving an entertainment to-morrow at Saint-Cloud, and there is no good entertainment for me unless I have the pleasure of seeing you there. Goodbye! I count on you".

Curiosity took me the following day to Madame Daverne's, and it was well repaid. There was a delightful illumination on the lake and fireworks, and everything was served with a profusion that spoke of the repeated gifts of the Regent. He did me the honour to remark to me that I was never seen at the Luxemburg; he added that on the following day he was taking supper with the Duchess de Berry, and it was evident that this was a command to me to be there.

Nevertheless, I was vexed over it, because I wanted to return to the Duchess of ***'s; but necessity forced me to put this off for a day. I went to the Luxemburg, where I found Madame Daverne, and Mesdames Parabère, de Gesvres and du Deffand. The Duchess de Berry did the honours well. There was an equal

[1] Wife of Maréchal d'Estrées.

number of men, the Regent, the Marquis de la Fare, Riom, Fargis[1] and I.

After cards, we sat down to table, and the Regent suggested that we should make the women tipsy, to find out their character in their cups. The suggestion was accepted, and all our heads became inflamed. The Regent, who was more excited with wine than the others, sang songs that were more than gay, and accompanied them with still more expressive gestures towards the ladies; the other men followed his example. La Fare proposed to show us a magic lantern of his invention. A room was prepared, and he threw on to the screen a series of engravings by Aretino, with appropriate couplets composed by him. During the darkness necessary for this show, each of the men took hold of a woman; I wanted to let my hands wander over a woman who was near me, but, wherever I tried to put them, I found others already occupying the place. I was less unfortunate with her neighbour.

It was coming away from this supper that there happened to the Regent that singular adventure which proves how much he had lost his head. He was in his carriage with La Fare and Fargis. For some time, everybody was silent, Fargis and La Fare out of respect, thinking that the Regent was asleep. But suddenly he broke the silence:

[1] These people were the set known as the Regent's *roués*, because as that Prince once remarked they all deserved to be broken on the wheel (roue). The scandal of the Duchesse de Berry's life is well-known. The Marquise du Deffand was compromised by the Regent and by Debrieu de Fargis.

" My friend", he said to La Fare, " I beg you, do me a service".

Whereupon La Fare replied that he was ready to obey.

" You must not refuse me, you know", the Regent went on. " I want you to cut off my right hand".

La Fare thought he was joking; but, the Regent having insisted, he replied that he would certainly not obey, and asked him what had induced him to come to so strange a resolution.

" What !" exclaimed the Regent, flown with wine, " cannot you smell the perfume on my hand from caressing those women we have been with ? I have not been able to remove it even by washing my hand with other scent, and the mixture has produced so unpleasant an odour that it gives me a horrible headache. I will not suffer it any longer. Cut off my hand".

Saying this, he placed his hand under La Fare's nose, who assured him that he could smell nothing. The dispute went on between them, the Regent persisting in his resolve to have his hand cut off and the other in his refusal. Happily for La Fare, they arrived at this juncture at the Palais-Royal, where the Regent, dead with sleep, forgot in bed the ridiculous request he had made[1].

La Fare, still bewildered by what had just passed between the Regent and him, and as flown with wine as the former, was imprudent enough to tell the story to Turgi; it came to the ears of Madame de Parabère,

[1] This sounds like the merest tittle-tattle.

who scolded the Regent for the state in which he had got himself. In vain did Madame de Gesvres point out to her that she should be careful with a lover who was the master of her fortune; nothing could stop her; the invectives continued, doubtless because she was one of those whom the Regent had accused of having infected his hand with so strong an odour. The Regent wanted to know who had set such a story about; La Fare was named; he arrived, and the Regent, who was furious, told him that, but for his kindness of heart, he would have thrown him out of the windows. La Fare, on his knees, asked for pardon, and said, in his excuse, that, being still more flown with wine than His Royal Highness, he had thought his notion of having his hand cut off so singular that he had not been able to prevent himself from speaking about it.

The Regent, still angry, turned his back on him, and this gave La Fare such a shock that, being doubtless liable to illness owing to his frequent excesses, he fell into a violent fever, from which Chirac rescued him by bleeding and the frequent use of the emetic. This illness alarmed La Fare's friends, and especially the young Princess de Conti[1], who was in love with him. The Regent, who was good-natured, paid him several visits to show him that he had been restored to his good graces, and this hastened La Fare's convalescence.

I had returned to the Duchess of ***'s country house, whither the Princess of ***, so she had written to me, was about to proceed. She arrived a day after

[1] Eldest sister of Mademoiselle de Charolais.

me; her lanky husband accompanied her, and that did not give me the greatest of pleasures. She could not get rid of her eternal companion; he was playing the languishing lover to his better half; but, seeing that he was no farther advanced, he was imploring the mediation of his wife's friends.

He did not fail to apply to the Duchess of ***, who promised to help him. One day, after I had had a long conversation with his wife and the duchess, he came to me, and told me that he was the most unfortunate of men; he gave me an account of what I knew already, and begged me to assist the duchess in obtaining from his wife forgiveness for his former errors. He could see quite well that I had some influence on the duchess's mind, and he wanted to make use of me to remind her of her promise.

His presence removed all possibility of the pleasure I had promised myself with the Princess of ***. His room was next to his wife's, and she did not dare to permit me to enter hers. Only once were we able to come together for a few moments in a small summer-house placed in one of the clearings of the wood; and even then fear diminished our pleasure; and I did not know what to do to obtain greater liberty. It is true that the Duchess of *** made up for this nuisance; nearly every evening I made use of my key to join her, and she was more tender and more loving than ever. However, I was far from being satisfied, and the difficulty of enjoying the princess privily increased my desire to be with her.

Several days passed in this state of agitation. I

knew the liking of the prince for piquet; and the Duchess of *** did not hate it either. The rain one evening preventing our walk, I proposed a game to the prince; he accepted; but, pretending to remember that I had letters to write to Paris, I asked the duchess to take my hand. I had previously informed the princess that, if she saw her husband occupied, the meeting-place was in my room; a glance from me told her that I was expecting her, and it was not long before she arrived. We made up a little for the constraint imposed on us; and it amused me to take a hand in private with the princess, while I kept her husband and the Duchess of *** at play elsewhere.

On the following day, I was luckier still; the Prince of ***, in despair over the lack of success of the efforts he had been making to come to terms with his wife, told the Duchess of *** and me that, if she still persisted in her refusals, he would have reason to believe that she was in love with someone. We sought to disabuse him.

" Well!" he went on, " bring her to reason then".

At that moment, he saw her going into the wood in the direction of the summer-house, and he begged me to go and speak to her seriously for him. I pretended to hesitate over accepting this commission. The Duchess of *** urged me to act as mediator, and to tell the princess that the time had come to forgive. She added that I should act in such a way as to bring the princess back to the drawing-room, where they would await me, to make a last effort with her.

I resisted no longer, and I determined not to lose

the opportunity that had presented itself so fortunately. I found the Princess of *** in the summer-house, where, after having laughed considerably over the part I was playing, I persuaded her to fill another. We took complete advantage of the moment that love offered us, and it was too delicious to be spent haſtily. The princess promised once more not to yield to her husband's pleadings, and told me to announce her arrival in the drawing-room, where they were awaiting her.

The prince's impatience was extreme. I replied to all his queſtions that at firſt I had been very well received; that the princess had seemed to me to be entirely well disposed, but that afterwards I had not been so pleased so far as he was concerned; that, however, she was coming herself to explain. She arrived at this moment, and, turning towards her husband, she told him that she was aſtonished that he should not be satisfied with the friendship and attention she had shown him; that it was he who had begun by not responding to a moſt affectionate love; that she had mourned for two years in the expectation of his returning to her, and that, believing herself condemned to suppress such fond feelings, she had managed to find the calm he had apparently desired to see in her; that this effort was his work, and that it was too late now to deſtroy the result. She held out her hand to him, offering to live with him as a friend, and imploring him not to demand more. She spoke with such nobility and firmness that the Duchess of *** did not know what to say in reply to her, and her husband retired, dismayed at her resolution.

Returned to Paris, we met but seldom in the little apartment. The prince had become excessively jealous; he had forced his wife to close her doors to Gontaut, who, still in love with her, visited her frequently. She sent word to me that she had a spy who watched her unceasingly. I had not seen her for several days, and I ventured to call on her; the order that had been given did not apply to me, and I found her alone. She informed me of the grief the excessive jealousy of her husband caused her, and said that for some time we must stop seeing each other. Fearing that I might not be able to speak to her, I had written to her, and my letter gave her instructions how to let me have news of her; I handed it to her so that she might make use of it, still fearing that we might be surprised, and that I should not be able to go on. She was holding this letter in her hand when the Prince of *** arrived; she was not sufficiently mistress of herself to hold her surprise, and I confess that I was not myself expecting this sudden apparition. The first impulse of the princess was to hide the letter; her husband, pretending to put on a laughing air, said to her, seizing her hand:

" That paper must be very important for you to hide it from my sight!"

The princess stammered; the prince redoubled his efforts to snatch the paper away from her. I thought it well to intervene; and the princess handed it to me.

" This letter, Sir", I then said to the husband, " is mine; it contains certain matters that are of no interest

to you, but which I wished to communicate to Madame."

The prince, pale and trembling with anger, replied that he could dispense with my communicating to his wife secrets that he could not share. I departed, convinced that the prince would follow me; but he did not appear.

In the evening, I met him at the Opera; he drew me aside, and, after having reproached me with being a disloyal friend and with seeking to seduce his wife instead of being an honest mediator, he demanded satisfaction for my conduct. The meeting was fixed for the following morning, on the boulevard near my house. We had only one of our servants for witness. I had already been to the Bastille for a duel with Nocé[1], and we wanted this to remain unknown.

The prince's skill was small, and it was even less under the influence of the fury that commanded him. Twice or thrice I had the opportunity of killing him; but, I wanted to disarm him or to wound him only in the arm, as I had too great a superiority over him. Chance decided otherwise: I received a thrust that might have pierced me through and through, but, luckily, it fell on one of my ribs, and, glancing along my chest, gave me only a deep flesh wound. I thought I was more dangerously wounded; the Prince of *** thought so too; the abundance of the flow of blood convinced him that I was dying; he made off, recommending me to the care of my man.

It took me several days to recover, and I then

[1] Query: Gacé?

reappeared in public to remove any suspicion of this combat. A presentiment I could not drive away made me uneasy over the Princess of ***; I received no news of her, and the first that reached me was of her death. If I had been struck by lightning, it could not have had a greater effect on me, and, if my wound had been more dangerous, it would have been all over with me.

I called on the Duchess of *** to mingle my tears with hers; she was far from thinking that I was mourning a charming mistress. Nobody had a suspicion of my intrigue with her, and my duel was completely unknown. The princess was subject to violent palpitations of the heart, and her death was attributed to too sudden a contraction of that organ.

As for me, I did not know what to think; I suspected the jealous fury of the Prince of ***, and, if at that time I had met him alone, he would have fallen a victim to my resentment. I found out long afterwards from the princess's maid, who had been paid to keep silent, that, after our duel, the Prince of *** had sought out his wife, and, after overwhelming her with reproaches, had assured her that he had killed me. She had been taken immediately with horrible convulsions[1], and, in the evening, when she went to bed, the maid had seen her put some drops of an unknown liquor into an infusion of orange peel, which gave rise to the belief that she had poisoned herself. However, no trace of poison was found.

I spent some time in the country with the Duchess of ***, where her consoling friendship blotted out

[1] So Madame de Tourvel dies after Valmont is killed in a duel.

memories that were harsh and cruel; pleasure drove away grief, and soon the dissipated life I led in Paris restored my former equanimity.

Madame de Villeroy, who was young and pretty and whom I often saw at the house of the Marshal, her father-in-law, roused new desires in me. I had the good fortune to please her, and, when you are loved, you easily find opportunities to prove it. We began a romance that had amusing consequences in the adventures it produced.

I was reconciled at the same time with Mademoiselle de Charolais, and I conducted simultaneously six intrigues that gave me plenty of employment. They were as nearly as possible the finest women at court.

The next instalment I shall send you will contain some rather amusing details, less tragic than the foregoing. I am astonished myself at all I did then. I will also give you a sketch of the Government, and you will see that, though fine things were done, they were accompanied by great stupidities. In order not to occupy you continually with love-affairs, I will add my reflexions on what I saw, and I will try to describe people as though you had been a witness of their actions. Be less impatient than the last time; I shall not be able to satisfy your curiosity within a month.

"*A period in some respects unique in human history.*"
SIR EDMUND GOSSE on the EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The BROADWAY LIBRARY *of* EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

Edited by RICHARD ALDINGTON

With a General Introduction by SIR EDMUND GOSSE

THE object of this series is to provide a collection of works illustrating the different aspects of eighteenth-century French life, literature, and thought. From this rich and varied period a choice has been made of those books which are most attractive to modern taste. Novels, stories, plays, poems, pamphlets, letters, confessions, memoirs—the current of the age flow through them all.

In all cases the books have been chosen for their intrinsic interest to us to-day—as pure literature, as striking examples of a stage of European thought, or as illustrating the life of the eighteenth century. The memoirs are rather personal than merely historic, certainly represent the Court, but also especially aim at revealing life in other classes. Incidentally, the Library illustrates the growth of opinion which culminated in the Revolution.

The series is printed in a Caslon type, with the preliminary pages in two colours. The volumes are bound in green buckram with gilt lettering and coloured tops.

Published by

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.

Broadway House, Carter Lane, London, E.C. 4

Dialogues. By *Denis Diderot.* Translated by *Francis Birrell*, with an Introduction. 10/6 net.

"Few men who have ever written have better succeeded in expressing their own personalities than he, and few men have been better worth knowing. His geniality, his unfailing faith in human nature, his passionate interest in humanity, his frank, buoyant, boyish enthusiasm shine from every page of these *Dialogues* rendered into English with admirable verve and fidelity."—SUNDAY TIMES.

"A sound and admirable piece of work which may be commended without reserve even to those familiar with the French language. His introduction indeed is all too short."—CRITERION.

The Sofa: a Moral Tale. By *Crébillon fils.* Translated by *Bonamy Dobrée*, with an Introduction. 12/6 net.

"Not a book that would be chosen for the prize-giving of a girls' school. But, accepting its amoral convention, how entertaining it is; how witty; how full of the comic spirit; and in its satire on human frailties, how wise! Thanks to the admirable translation, the vivacity and the subtle effects of the original are preserved."—MORNING POST.

"The elegant licentiousness of the story and the light unruffled satire afford both amusement and illumination."—THE TIMES.

Letters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great. Translated by *Richard Aldington*, with an Introduction. 15/- net.

"His translation is an admirably stylish piece of work. The correspondence is one of the most varied and entertaining of all the great collections of letters; the light it throws on the personality of both the monarch and the philosopher has fascination enough, but the critical and intellectual matter of the letters is probably of even greater importance."—THE TIMES.

"Intimate outpourings of two of the ablest, vainest and most perfidious men who ever lived. Mr. Aldington has accomplished his work with such admirable fidelity and spirit that the letters read in his version almost as brilliantly as in the original."—SUNDAY TIMES.

Memoirs of the Bastille. By *Latude* and *Linguet.* Translated by *J.* and *S. F. Mills Whitham*, with an Introduction. With 4 plates. 10/6 net.

"Here is a book which is more thrilling and enthralling than any cloak-and-sword novel. A valuable addition to the series."—MORNING POST.

"Latude's account is vivid from first to last; in all the celebrated fiction treating of escapes there is nothing to beat for excitement his of the Bastille. Latude was in some respects both knave and fool, but he certainly knew how to write . . . . The memoirs are excellently translated and introduced."—TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

The Reveries of a Solitary. By *Jean Jacques Rousseau.* Translated by *John Gould Fletcher*, with an Introduction. With a portrait. 10/6 net.

"Here he took up the story of his life where the *Confessions* leave it. The *Reveries* was Rousseau's last book. It has, perhaps, been neglected, and its translation by Mr. Fletcher is welcome. It is rich in the characteristics and peculiarities which made the son of a Geneva watchmaker such a 'turbulent and disorderly intellectual force' in his day."—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

"Mr. Fletcher has provided not only an impeccable translation but an introduction which is a model of its kind."—MANCHESTER DISPATCH.

The Private Life of the Marshal Duc de Richelieu. Translated by *F. S. Flint*, with an Introduction by *Richard Aldington.* With 4 plates. 10/6 net.

"A classic of alcove strategy."—NEW STATESMAN.

"An amusing and scandalous account of some of the Duke's amorous adventures."—NATION.

"Amazingly and amusingly readable, a strange picture of the licence which was permitted to a 'grand seigneur.'"—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

"He was the most notorious rake of his age, and the *Private Life* is a record of the exploits of a heartless, calculating, and consummate seducer."—SATURDAY REVIEW.

Short Stories of the French Eighteenth Century: Fortunes in the Fire, by *Crebillon fils;* A Tale of Felicity, by *Voisenon;* Arsace and Isménie, by *Montesquieu.* Translated by *Mrs. Wilfrid Jackson*, with Introductions. With 4 plates. 10/6 net.

"This world flowers to perfection in *Fortunes in the Fire* and in a *Tale of Felicity*. Crébillon is perhaps the most famous delineator of this eighteenth-century world, and his wit is perfect of its kind. The Abbe Voisenon's outlook on life was a trifle wider, but he was a man of Crébillon's world, and, though he may say a little more about unhappiness, he says no more about sin than Crébillon."—TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

Letters, and Memoirs. By *the Prince de Ligne.* Translated by *Leigh Ashton*, with an Introduction. With 4 plates. 10/6 net.

"The Prince de Ligne was no fool in the field, and he wrote very agreeably indeed on war, gardening, love, and the history of his own changing times. Above all he was a brilliant eighteenth-century figure, who lived to see Napoleon out. Frivolous as he was, he yet exercises upon us to-day a strong attraction. We have here only a fragment of his work, but it is well chosen. The introduction strikes the right note, and the translation is easy and most graceful."—TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

"The portrait is complete in the living quality of its subject's charm. There is little in this volume one could dispense with."—NEW STATESMAN.